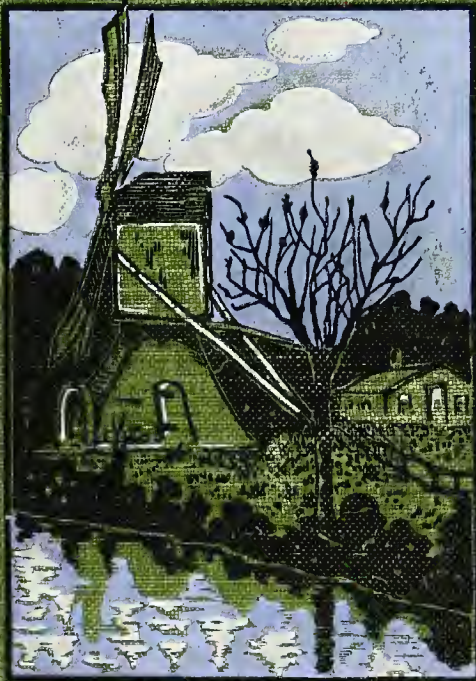


WALTER  
PIETERSE  
*A STORY OF HOLLAND*



By MULTATULI

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*Hauwensleker*



# *Walter Pieterse*

A STORY OF HOLLAND

BY

MULTATULI

(*Eduard Douwes Dekker*)

TRANSLATED BY

HUBERT EVANS, Ph.D.



New York

FRIDERICI & GAREIS

6 EAST SEVENTEENTH STREET

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## PREFACE

**M**OST of us know that The Hague is somewhere in Holland; and we all know that Queen Wilhelmina takes a beautiful picture; but to how many of us has it occurred that the land of Spinoza and Rembrandt is still running a literary shop?

How many of us have ever heard of Eduard Douwes Dekker? Very few, I fear, except professional critics. And yet, the man who, forty years ago, became famous as Multatuli (I have borne much), was not only the greatest figure in the modern literature of the Netherlands, but one of the most powerful and original writers in the literature of the world. An English critic has called him the Heine of Holland; Anatole France calls him the Voltaire of the Netherlands.

Eduard Douwes Dekker was born in 1820, at Amsterdam, his father being the captain of a merchantman trading in the Dutch colonies. At the age of eighteen Dekker sailed on his father's vessel for the East Indies, determined to abandon the business career that had been mapped out for him and enter the colonial service. In 1839 he received a clerkship in the civil service at Batavia. He now remained in the employ of the government for seventeen years, being promoted from one grade to another until he was made Assistant Resident of Lebak in 1856.

In this important position he used his influence to better the condition of the natives; but, to his sorrow, he soon found that he did not have the support of his superiors. What he conceived to be right clashed with the line of conduct he was expected to follow. In a rash moment of "righteous indignation" he handed in his resignation; and it was accepted.

This hasty step put an end to a brilliant political career and entailed upon Dekker years of disappointment and hardship. Seeing that he was pursuing the wrong method to help either the Javanese, or himself, he immediately tried to get reinstated, but without success. In 1857 he returned to Holland and applied to the home government, hoping to be vindicated and restored to his post. Again he was disappointed. The government offered him another desirable position; but, as it was a matter of principle with Dekker, he declined it.

When he saw that it was useless to importune the government further, Dekker made his appeal to the people in "Max Havelaar" (1860). The book was an instant success and made the name of Multatuli famous. Through the perfidy of a supposed friend, however, Dekker failed to get very substantial material rewards from this work. For ten years yet he was struggling with poverty.

The Bohemian life that Dekker was now compelled to live—his family was on the sufferance of friends—estranged him from his wife and strengthened what some might call an unfortunate—or, at least, an untimely—literary friendship that Dekker had formed

with a certain Miss Mimi Schepel, of The Hague. The spiritual affinity between the two soon developed a passion that neither could resist. This estimable lady, who afterwards became Dekker's second wife, is still living, and has edited Dekker's letters in nine volumes. Dekker died in February, 1887, at his home in Nieder-Ingelheim, where he had lived for several years.

The "Woutertje Pieterse" story was first published in Dekker's seven volume work entitled "Ideen." Here it is sandwiched in between miscellaneous sketches, essays and treatises, being scattered all the way from Vol. I to Vol. VII. The story falls naturally into two parts, of which the present volume is the first part. The second part, written in a different key, deals with "Walter's Apprenticeship."

A good deal of the flax, or silk, of his Chinaman's pigtail, to use Dekker's form of expression, I have unraveled as being extraneous matter. However, despite these omissions, it is quite possible that some very sensitive person may still find objectionable allusions in the book. If so, I must refer that one to the shade of Multatuli. From his own admission his shoulders were evidently broad; and, no doubt, they will be able to bear the additional strain.

HUBERT EVANS.

NEW YORK CITY,  
*November, 1904.*



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# WALTER PIETERSE

## CHAPTER I

I DON'T know the year; but, since the reader will be interested to know the time when this story begins, I will give him a few facts to serve as landmarks.

My mother complained that provisions were dear, and fuel as well. So it must have been before the discovery of Political Economy. Our servant-girl married the barber's assistant, who had only one leg. "Such a saving of shoe-leather," the good little soul argued. But from this fact one might infer that the science of Political Economy had already been discovered.

At all events, it was a long time ago. Amsterdam had no sidewalks, import duties were still levied, in some civilized countries there were still gallows, and people didn't die every day of nervousness. Yes, it was a long time ago.

The *Hartenstraat!* I have never comprehended why this street should be called thus. Perhaps it is an error, and one ought to write *Hertenstraat*, or something else. I have never found more "heartiness" there than elsewhere; besides, "harts" were

not particularly plentiful, although the place could boast of a poulterer and dealer in venison.

I haven't been there for a long time, and I only remember that the *Straat* connects two main canal-streets, canals that I would fill up if I had the power to make Amsterdam one of the most beautiful cities of Europe.

My predilection for Amsterdam, our metropolis, does not make me blind to her faults. Among these I would mention first her complete inability to serve as the scene of things romantic. One finds here no masked Dominos on the street, the common people are everywhere open to inspection, no Ghetto, no Templebar, no Chinese quarter, no mysterious courtyard. Whoever commits murder is hanged; and the girls are called "Mietje" and "Jansje"—everything prose.

It requires courage to begin a story in a place ending with "dam." There it is difficult to have "Emeranties" and "Héloïses"; but even these would be of little use, since all of these belles have already been profaned.

How do the French authors manage, though, to dress up their "Margots" and "Marions" as ideals and protect their "Henris" and Ernestes from the trite and trivial? These last remind one of *M'sieu Henri* or *M'sieu Erneste* just about like our castle embankments remind one of filthy water.

Goethe was a courageous man: Gretchen, Klärchen——

But I, in the Hartenstraat!

However, I am not writing a romance; and even if

I should write one, I don't see why I shouldn't publish it as a true story. For it is a true story, the story of one who in his youth was in love with a sawmill and had to endure this torture for a long time.

For love is torture, even if it is only love for a sawmill.

It will be seen that the story is going to be quite simple, in fact too frail to stand alone. So here and there I am going to plait something in with the thread of the narrative, just as the Chinaman does with his pigtail when it is too thin. He has no *Eau de Lob* or oil from Macassar—but I admit that I have never found at Macassar any berries which yielded the required oil.

To begin, in the Hartenstraat was a book-shop and circulating library. A small boy with a city complexion stood on the step and seemed to be unable to open the door. It was evident that he was trying to do something that was beyond his strength.

He stretched out his hand towards the door knob repeatedly, but every time he interrupted this motion either by stopping to pull unnecessarily at a big square-cut collar that rested on his shoulders like a yoke, or by uselessly lifting his hand to screen an ingenuous cough.

He was apparently lost in the contemplation of the pictures that covered the panes of glass in the door, turning them into a model chart of inconceivable animals, four-cornered trees and impossible soldiers. He was glancing continually to one side, like a criminal who fears that he is going to be caught in the act.

It was manifest that he had something in view which must be concealed from passers-by, and from posterity, for that matter. His left hand was thrust under the skirts of his little coat, clutching convulsively at something concealed in his trousers pocket. To look at him one would have thought that Walter contemplated a burglary, or something of the kind.

For his name was Walter.

It is a fortunate thing that it occurred to me to relate his history; and now I consider it my duty to report that he was entirely innocent of any burglarious or murderous intentions.

I only wish I could clear him of other sins as easily as this. The object he was turning and twisting in his left breeches pocket was not a house-key, nor a jimmy, nor a club, nor a tomahawk, nor any infernal machine: It was a small piece of paper containing fourteen stivers, which he had raised on his New Testament with Psalms at the grocer's on the "Ouwebrug"; and the thing that held him fast on the Hartenstraat was nothing more or less than his entrance into the magic world of romance. He was going to read "Glorioso."

Glorioso! Reader, there are many imitations, but only one Glorioso. All the Rinaldos and Fra Diavolos are not to mentioned in the same breath with Glorioso, this incomparable hero who carried away countesses by the dozen, plundered popes and cardinals as if they were ordinary fallible people, and made a testament-thief of Walter Pieterse.

To be sure, Glorioso was not to blame for this last, certainly not. One ought to be ashamed to be a



hero, or a genius, or even a robber, if on this account one is to be held responsible for all the crimes that may be committed years afterwards in the effort to get possession of one's history.

I myself object to any accusation of complicity in those evil deeds that are committed after my death in quenching the thirst for knowledge of my fate. Indeed, I shall never be deterred from a famous career merely by the thought that some one may sell the New Testament to get hold of the "Life and Deeds of Multatuli."

"You rascal, what are you loitering around here for? If you want anything, come in; if you don't, make yourself scarce."

And now Walter had to go in, or else abandon his cherished Glorioso. But the man who bent over the counter and twisted himself like a crane to open the door and snarl these words at our young hero did not have a face that advised anything like turning back. He was angry. At first Walter had not had the courage to go in; now he did not dare to turn back. He felt himself drawn in. It was as if the book-shop swallowed him.

"Glorioso, if you please, M'neer, and here——"  
He drew that infernal machine from his pocket.  
"And here is money——"

For he had learned from his schoolmates, who had infected him with this craving for romance, that at the circulating library strangers must deposit a forfeit.

The shopman seemed to regard himself as "sufficiently protected" by the sum produced. He took

down a small volume, which was greasy and well worn, and bore both within and without the traces of much unclean enjoyment.

I am certain that the "Sermons of Pastor Splitvesel," which stood undisturbed on the top shelf and looked down contemptuously on the literature of the day, would have been ashamed to bring their spotless binding into contact with so much uncleanness. But it is not difficult to remain clean in the upper row. I find, therefore, that the "sermons" were unjust; and the same is true of many sermons.

After Walter had given his name to the man in a trembling voice, he stuck the reward of his misdeed under his coat and hurried out the door, like a cat making away with the prey for which it has waited for hours.

Walter ran and ran, and did not know where to go. He couldn't go home; he was watched too closely there,—which was not very difficult, as the space was rather limited.

He selected quiet streets and finally came to a gateway that he remembered to have seen several times. It was a low, smooth arch, where it always smelled like ashes. Here, as a truant, he had taken that leap! He was with Franz Halleman, who had dared him to cut sacred studies and jump from the top of this arch. Walter did it just because little Franz had questioned his courage.

To this escapade he was indebted for his great familiarity with the prophet Habakkuk, whose prophecies he had to copy twelve times as a penalty. Further, the sprain that he got in his big toe on that

occasion gave him a good barometer in that organ, which always warned him of approaching rain.

In a certain sense Habakkuk is to be regarded as marking a transition in Walter's life, *viz.* from nursery rhymes to books which deal with big people. For some time he had felt his admiration for "brave Heinriche" to be growing; and he was disgusted with the paper peaches that are distributed as the reward of diligence in the beautiful stories. Of any other peaches he had no knowledge, as the real article was never seen in the houses he visited.

Nothing was more natural than that he should most ardently long to talk with the older schoolboys about the wonders of the real world, where people ride in coaches, devastate cities, marry princesses, and stay up in the evening till after 10 o'clock—even if it isn't a birthday. And then at the table one helps one's self, and may select just whatever one wants to eat. So think children.

Every boy has his heroic age, and humanity, as a whole, has worn the little coat with the big collar.

But how far can this comparison be carried? Where does the identity stop? Will the human race become mature? and more than mature?—old? Feeble and childish?

How old are we now? Are we boys, youths, men? Or are we already——? No, that would be too unpleasant to think of.

Let us suppose that we are just in the exuberance of youth! We are then no longer children exactly, and still we may hope something of the future.

Yes, of the future,—when this stifling school at-

mosphere has been blown away. When we shall take pleasure in the short jacket of the boy that comes after us; when people will be at liberty to be born without any legal permit, and will not be reviled for it; when humanity will speak one language; when metaphysics and religion have been forgotten, and knowledge of nature takes the place of noble birth. When we shall have broken away from the nursery stories.

There is some silk for my Chinaman's pigtail.  
Some will say it is only flax.

## CHAPTER II

**W**ALTER thought neither of the heroic age nor of Chinese cues. Without any feeling for the beauty of the landscape, he hurried along till he came to a bridge that spanned a marshy ditch. After looking about carefully to assure himself that he was alone, he selected this bridge for his reading-room, and proceeded at once to devour his robber undisturbed.

For a moment I felt tempted to make the reader a participant of Walter's pleasure by giving a sketch of the immortal work that chained the boy's attention. But aside from the fact that I am not very well versed in *Glorioso*—which fact of itself, though, would not prevent me from speaking about him—I have many other things of a more urgent nature to relate, and am compelled therefore to take the reader directly to the *Hartenstraat*, hoping that he will be able to find his way just as well as if he had crossed the *Ouwebrug*—the old bridge.

Suffice it to say that Walter found the book "very nice." The virtuous *Amalia*, in the glare of flaring torches, at the death-bed of her revered mother, in the dismal cypress valley, swearing that her ardent love for the noble robber—through the horrible trap-door, the rusty chains, her briny tears—in a word, it was stirring! And there was more morality in it, too, than in all the insipid imitations. All the members of

the band were married and wore gloves. In the cave was an altar, with wax tapers; and those chapters in which girls were abducted always ended with a row of most decorous periods, or with mysterious dashes—which Walter vainly held up to the light in his effort to learn more about it.

He read to, "Die, betrayer!" Then it was dark, and he knew that it was time to go home. He was supposed to be taking a walk with the Halleman boys, —who were "such respectable children." With regret he closed the precious volume and hurried away as fast as he could, for he was afraid he was going to get a whipping for staying away so long.

"You will never get permission again"—thus he was always threatened on such occasions. But he understood, of course, that they didn't mean it. He knew too well that people like to get rid of the children for a while when they are a little short of space at home. And then the little Halleman boys were "such extraordinarily respectable children; they lived next to a house with a portico, and recently they had taken off their little caps so politely."

Now, I don't believe that the Halleman boys were any more respectable than other boys of Walter's acquaintance; and, as I would like to give some reasons for my belief, I am going to relate an incident that had happened some time before this.

Walter never got any pocket-money. His mother considered this unnecessary, because he got at home everything that he needed. It mortified him to have to wait for an invitation to join in a game of ball with his companions, and then be reminded that he

had contributed nothing towards buying the ball. In Walter's time that useful instrument of sport cost three doits—just a trifle. Now I suppose they are more expensive—but no, cheaper, of course, on account of Political Economy.

On many occasions he was depressed by reason of this lack of money. We shall see later whether what his mother said was true, or not: that he received at home everything he needed. It is certain that at home he never had the privilege of doing with some little thing as he pleased, which is very nice for children. And for grown-up people, too.

The Hallemans—who were so especially respectable—gave him to understand that they had no desire to bear all the expenses. Franz calculated that Walter's friendship had already cost them nine stivers, which I find high—not for the friendship, but merely as an estimate. Gustave said it was still more; but that is a detail. Gustave, too, had let him have four slate pencils, that he might court "the tall Cecilia," who wouldn't have anything to do with him because he wore a jacket stuck in his trousers—the kind small boys wore then. She accepted the pencils, and then made Gustave a present of them for a kiss.

The reproaches of the little Hallemans, who were so very respectable, almost drove Walter to despair.

"I have told my mother, but she won't give me anything."

The little Hallemans, who were so respectable, said: "What's that you're giving us? You're a parasite."

This was the first time Walter had ever heard the

word, but he knew what it meant. Nothing sharpens the wits like bitterness of heart.

“A parasite, a parasite—I’m a parasite,” and he ran off screaming, making a detour in order to avoid the street where Cecilia’s father had a second-hand store. Oh, if she had seen him running through the street crying like a baby—that would have been worse than the breeches pulled up over his jacket!

A parasite, a parasite!

He met lots of grown-up people who perhaps were parasites, but they were not bawling on this account.

Parasite!

He saw a policeman, and caught his breath when he got by him, surprised that the man hadn’t arrested him.

Parasite!

Then came a street-sweeper with his cart, who seemed to rattle that hateful word after him.

Our little sufferer remembered that the Halleman boys had once told him what a fortune could be made by peddling peppermint drops. For twenty-four stivers one could buy a big sack full. By selling so and so many for a doit, the profit would be enormous. If one only had the capital to begin! The Halleman had calculated everything very exactly; for they were not only very respectable, but also very cunning. Cunningness and respectability usually go hand in hand. They had said, all that was needed was the capital. They would attend to laying in the stock, and would assume all responsibility for the sale of the same. If Walter would chip in just a florin, they could raise the rest and all would go well.



Parasite. . . . Parasite. . . .

Walter slipped a florin from his mother's box of savings and brought it to the Halleman boys, who were so remarkably respectable.

"Where did you get it?" asked Gustave, but careful not to give Walter time to answer, or to fall into an embarrassing silence.

"Where did you get it?"—without any interrogation point—"fine! Franz and I will each add one like it. That'll make twenty-four, and then we'll buy the peppermints. There's a factory on the *Rosengracht*—such a sack for four shillings. Franz and I will do everything. We'll have more opportunity at school, you understand. Christian Kloskamp has already ordered twelve; he'll pay after the holidays. We'll take all the trouble; you needn't do anything, Walter—and then an equal divide. You can depend upon it."

Walter went home and dreamed of unheard-of wealth. He would put a dollar in his mother's savings-bank, and buy for Cecilia a lead pencil from the man who had picked holes in the wood-work of his wagon with them. So strong were they! That would be something entirely different from those slate pencils; and if the tall Cecilia still wouldn't have him, then—but Walter did not care to think further. There are abysses along the path of fancy that we do not dare to sound. We see them instinctively, close the eyes and—I only know that on that evening Walter fell asleep feeling good, expecting soon to have a good conscience over his little theft and hoping that Cecilia would give him a happy heart.

Alas, alas! Little Walter had made his calculations without taking into consideration the slyness and respectability of the Hallems. They lay in wait for him the next day as he came from school. Walter, who had painted to himself how they would be panting under the weight of the great sack; Walter, who was so anxious to know if Christian Kloskamp had taken what he had ordered; Walter, who was burning with curiosity as to the success of the venture—oh, he was bitterly disappointed. Gustave Halleman not only carried no sack of peppermints. What's more, he had a very grave face. And little Franz looked like virtue itself.

"Well, how is everything?" Walter asked, but without saying a word. He was too curious not to ask, and too fearful to express the question otherwise than by opening his mouth and poking out his face.

"Don't you know, Walter, we've been thinking about the matter; and there's a lot to be said against the plan."

Poor Walter! In that moment both his heart and his conscience suffered shipwreck. Away with your dreams of ethical vindication, away with the gaping money-boxes of mothers—away, lead pencil that was to bore a hole in the hard heart of the tall Cecilia—gone, gone, gone, everything lost.

"You see, Walter, the mint-drops might melt."

"Y-e-s," sobbed Walter.

"And Christian Kloskamp, who ordered twelve—don't you know——"

"Y-e-s."

I wonder if Christian was likely to melt too.

"He is leaving school, and will certainly not return after the holidays."

"H-e-e i-i-s?"

"Yes, and for that reason, and also because there are not anything like so many to the pound as we had thought. Mint-drops are heavy. We've calculated everything, Franz and I."

"Yes," added little Franz, with the seriousness of one giving important advice in a time of great danger, "the things are very heavy at present. Feel this one; but you must give it back to me."

Walter weighed the mint-drop on his finger and returned it conscientiously.

He found it heavy. Ah, in this moment he was so depressed that he would have found everything heavy.

Franz stuck the piece of candy into his mouth, and sucking at it continued:

"Yes, really, very heavy. These are the English drops, you know. And then there is something else, too, isn't there, Gustave? The propriety, the respectability! Tell him, Gustave."

"The respectability," cried Gustave, significantly.

"We mean the respectability of it," repeated Franz, as if he were explaining something.

Walter looked first from one to the other, and did not seem to comprehend.

"You tell him, Gustave."

"Yes, Walter, Franz will tell you," said Gustave.

"Walter, our papa is a deacon, and carries a portfolio, and there where we live is a——"

"Yes," cried Gustave, "there on the *Gracht*, you know, lives M'neer Krulewinkel. He has a villa——"

“With a portico,” added Franz.

“It’s just on account of our standing—don’t you see, Walter? And when a visitor comes our mother brings out the wine.”

“Yes, Maderia, Maderia! And our tobacco-box is silver, and——”

“No, Franz, it isn’t silver; but, Walter, it looks just like silver.”

Our poor little sinner understood all of this, but he failed to see what bearing it might have on his own disappointed hopes. He stuttered: “Yes, Gustave—yes, Franz—but the peppermint——”

“We just wanted to tell you that we are very respectable, don’t you see?”

“Yes, Gustave.”

“And well-behaved.”

“Y-e-e-s, Franz.” Poor Walter!

“And then as you said you never got any pocket-money——”

“Yes, Walter—and don’t you know? Because our papa is so respectable—when winter comes you can see how he looks after the orphans.”

“Yes, and he rings at every door. And—and—we are afraid, that you——”

“That you——”

“The florin——”

“The florin! You understand?”

“That you didn’t get it——”

“That you didn’t get it honestly. That’s it,” said Franz, sticking another mint-drop into his mouth, perhaps to brace himself up.

It was out at last. Poor, miserable Walter.

“ And on that account, Walter, we would rather not keep the money, but just divide now—equally, as we all agreed.”

“ Yes,” cried Gustave, “ divide equally. The work—we—you understand?”

They divided the profits. And the Hallemans were sleek about it. Twenty-four stivers; three into twenty-four goes eight times, therefore—

Walter received eight stivers.

“ Don’t you see,” explained Gustave, “ we couldn’t do it, because our papa is a deacon.”

“ Yes—and our tobacco-box, even if it isn’t pure silver, it’s just like silver.”

My lack of faith in the extreme respectability of the Hallemans is based upon the foregoing story; and I am inclined to think that all this “ respectability ” of which Walter heard so much at home was only an excuse on his mother’s part to get him out of the way. For there was a lack of room. If she had wanted to use Walter about the house, it is questionable if she had discovered anything especially respectable about those boys.

Many laws and most customs have their origin in a “ lack of room ”—in the intellect, in one’s character, in the house or flat, in the fields, in the city.

This applies to the preference for the right hand—a result of crowding at the table—to the institution of marriage, and to many things lying between these extremes.

## CHAPTER III

WE will not try to explain further this fruitful principle of "limitation of space." Walter knew the fruit of it, even if he failed to recognize the origin. He was not worried so much by the mere coming home as by the punishment he expected to receive as soon as that New Testament should be missed. He had returned from his little excursion into the country with Glorioso, and now in Amsterdam again the memory of his recent offense—or shall I say the anticipation of what was coming?—lay heavily on his mind.

If we could think away all the results of crime committed, there would be very little left of what we call conscience.

But Walter consoled himself with the thought that it wasn't a thimble this time. The testament will not be missed at once, he reflected, because Sunday was a long way off, and no one would ask about it during the week.

No, it was not a thimble, or a knitting-needle, or a sugar-bowl, or anything in daily use.

When our hero got home, he stuck his greasy Glorioso under Leentje's sewing-table—the same Leentje who had sewed up his breeches after that wonderful leap, so that his mother never found out about it. She

went down to her grave in ignorance of these torn breeches.

But Leentje was employed to patch breeches and such things. She received for this seven stivers a week, and every evening a slice of bread and butter.

Long after the Habakkuk period, Walter often thought of her humble "Good-evening, Juffrouw; good-evening, M'neer and the young Juffrouwen; good-evening, Walter," etc.

Yes, Walter's mother was called Juffrouw, on account of the shoe-business. For Juffrouw is the title of women of the lower middle classes, while plain working women are called simply Vrouw. Mevrouw is the title of women of the better classes. And so it is in the Netherlands till to-day: The social structure is a series of classes, graduated in an ascending scale. Single ladies are also called Juffrouw, so that Juffrouw may mean either a young lady or a young matron—who need not necessarily be so young. The young Juffrouwen were Walter's sisters, who had learned how to dance. His brother had been called M'neer since his appointment as assistant at the "intermediate school," a sort of charity school now no longer in existence. His mother had spliced his jacket that he might command the respect of the boys, and remarked that the name "Stoffel" scarcely suited him now. This explains why Leentje addressed him as M'neer. To Walter she simply said Walter, for he was only a small boy. Walter owed her three stivers, or, to be exact, twenty-six doits, which he never did pay her. For, years afterward, when he

wanted to return the money to her, there were no more doits; and, besides, Leentje was dead.

This pained him very much, for he had thought a great deal of her. She was ugly, even dirty, and was stoop-shouldered, too. Stoffel, the schoolmaster, said that she had an evil tongue: She was thought to have started the report that he had once eaten strawberries with sugar in the "Netherlands." This was a small garden-restaurant.

I am willing to admit the truth of all this; but what more could one expect for seven stivers and a slice of bread and butter? I have known duchesses who had larger incomes; and still in social intercourse they were not agreeable.

Leentje was stooped as a result of continuous sewing. Her needle kept the whole family clothed; and she knew how to make two jackets and a cap out of an old coat and still have enough pieces left for the gaiters that Stoffel needed for his final examination. He fell through on account of a mistake in Euclid.

With the exception of Walter nobody was satisfied with Leentje. I believe they were afraid of spoiling her by too much kindness. Walter's sisters were always talking about "class" and "rank," saying that "everyone must stay in his place." This was for Leentje. Her father had been a cobbler who soled shoes, while the father of the young Juffrouwen had had a store in which "shoes from Paris" were sold. A big difference. For it is much grander to sell something that somebody else has made than to make something one's self.



The mother thought that Leentje might be a little cleaner. But I am going to speak of the price again, and of the difficulty of washing when one has no time, no soap, no room, and no water. At that time water-pipes had not been laid, and, if they had been, it's a question if the water had ever got as far as Leentje.

So, everyone but Walter had a spite against Leentje. He liked her, and was more intimate with her than with anyone else in the house, perhaps because the others could not endure him, and there was nothing left for him to do but to seek consolation from her. For every feeling finds expression, and nothing is lost, either in the moral or in the material world. I could say more about this, but I prefer to drop the subject now, for the organ-grinder under my window is driving me crazy.

Walter's mother called him, "That boy." His brothers—there were more beside Stoffel—affirmed that he was treacherous and morose, because he spoke little and didn't care for "marbles." When he did say anything, they attributed to him a relationship with King Solomon's cat. His sisters declared he was a little devil. But Walter stood well with Leentje. She consoled him, and considered it disgraceful that the family didn't make more out of such a boy as Walter. She had seen that he was not a child like ordinary children. And I should scarcely take the trouble to write his story if he had been.

Up to a short time after his trip to Hartenstraat, Ash Gate and the old bridge, Leentje was Walter's sole confidant. To her he read the verses that slender

Cecilia had disdained. To her he poured out his grief over the injustice of his teacher Pennewip, who gave him only "Fair," while to that red-headed Keesje he gave "Very good" underscored—Keesje who couldn't work an example by himself and always "stuck" in "Holland Counts."

"Poor boy," said Leentje, "you're right about it." They went over into the Bavarian house. It's a disgrace! And to save a doit on the pound.

She claimed that Keesje's father, who was a butcher, let Pennewip have meat at a reduced price, and that this was what was the matter with all those Holland counts and their several houses.

Later Walter looked upon this as a "white lie," for Pennewip, when examined closely, didn't look like a man who would carry on a crooked business with beefsteak. But in those days he accepted gladly this frivolous suspicion against the man's honor as a plaster for his own, which had been hurt by the favoritism towards Keesje. Whenever our honor is touched, or what we regard as our honor, then we think little of the honor of others.

When his brothers jeered at him and called him "Professor Walter," or when his sisters scolded him for his "idiotic groping among the bed-curtains," or when his mother punished him for eating up the rice that she intended to serve again "to-morrow"—then it was always Leentje who restored the equilibrium of his soul and banished his cares, just as, with her inimitable stitches, she banished the "triangles" from his jacket and breeches.

Ugly, dirty, evil-tongued Leentje, how Walter did like you! What consolation radiated from her thimble, what encouragement even in the sight of her tapeline! And what a lullaby in those gentle words: "There now, you have a needle and thread and scraps. Sew your little sack for your pencils and tell me more of all those counts, who always passed over from one house into another."

## CHAPTER IV

**I** DON'T know what prophet Walter got as punishment for that pawned Bible. The pastor came to preach a special sermon. The man was simply horrified at such impiousness. Juffrouw Laps, who lived in the lower anteroom, had heard about it too. She was very pious and asserted that such a boy was destined for the gallows.

“One begins with the Bible,” she said significantly, “and ends with something else.”

No one has ever found out just what that “something else” is which follows a beginning with the Bible. I don't think she knew herself, and that she said it to make people believe that she possessed much wisdom and knew more about the world than she gave utterance to. Now, I admit that I have no respect for wisdom that cannot express itself in intelligible words, and, if it had been my affair, I should have very promptly drawn a tight rein on Juffrouw Laps.

Stoffel delivered an exhortation in which he brought out all that had been forgotten by the preacher. He spoke of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who had erred similarly to Walter and had been sent to an early grave for their sins. He said too, that the honor of the family had been lost at the “Ouwebrug,” that it was his duty, “as the eldest son of an irreproachable widow and third assistant at the intermediate school, to take care of the honor of the house——”

“Of Bavaria,” said Leentje softly.

That “a marriage, or any other arrangemnet for the girls, would be frustrated by Walter’s offence, for no one would have anything to do with girls who——”

In short, Stoffel accented the fact that it was “a disgrace,” and that “he would never be able to look anyone in the face who knew of this crime.” He remarked distinctly that the schoolboys must know of it, for Louis Hopper had already stuck out his tongue at him!

And finally, that he “shuddered to cross the new market-place”—in those days criminals were scourged, branded and hanged here—because it reminded him so disagreeably of Juffrouw Laps’s horrible allusion to Walter’s fate.

Then followed all sorts of things about Korahs, Dathans and Abirams, whereupon the whole family broke out in a wail. For it was so pathetic.

Walter comforted himself with thoughts of Glorioso, and, whenever that “something else” of Juffrouw Laps was spoken of, he just dreamed of his marriage with beautiful Amalia, whose train was carried by six pages. I fancy Juffrouw Laps would have made a pretty face if she had learned of this interpretation of her mysterious climax.

All efforts to compel our hero to tell how he had spent that money were in vain. After all known means had been applied, the attempt to force a confession had to be abandoned. Water and bread, water without bread, bread without water, no water and no bread, the preacher, Stoffel, Habakkuk, Juffrouw Laps, tears, the rod—all in vain. Walter was not the

boy to betray Glorioso. This was what he had found so shabby of Scelerajoso, who had to pay the penalty, as we have seen.

As soon as he got the privilege of walking again with the Hallems, who were so eminently respectable, he hurried away to the old bridge, near Ash Gate, to continue his thrilling book. He read up to that fatal moment when he had to tell his hero good-bye, and on the last page saw Glorioso, as a major-general, peacefully expire in the arms of the virtuous Alvira.

When Walter had returned the book to Hartenstraat his eye was attracted by some almond-cakes at the confectioner's on the corner. He did with Glorioso just as the Athenians did with Kodrus: No one was worthy to be the successor of such a hero, and within a few days the residue of the New Testament had been converted into stomach-destroying pastry.

I ought to add that a part of the "balance" left after that Italian excursion—perhaps the part contributed by the Psalms—was invested in a triple-toned, ear-splitting, soul-searing harmonica, which was finally confiscated by Master Pennewip as being a disturbing element in the schoolroom.

## CHAPTER V

**I** DON'T feel called upon to pass judgment on the strife between Leentje and Pennewip regarding the latter's partiality towards Keesje, the butcher's son. But that fiery feeling for right and justice which has harrassed me from my earliest youth—ah, for years have I waited in vain for justice—and the foolish passion for hunting after mitigating circumstances, even when the misdeed has been proved—all this compels me to say that Pennewip's lot might be considered a mitigating circumstance for a man convicted of the eight deadly sins.

I have found that many great men began their careers as feeders of hogs (see biographical encyclopedias); and it seems to me that this occupation develops those qualities necessary in ruling or advancing mankind.

If the theologians should happen to criticise this story, and perhaps accuse me of far-reaching ignorance, because I enumerate one cardinal sin more than they knew of, or of the crime of classifying man as a sort of hog, I reply that, still another new canonical sin could be discovered that they have never studied. And that ought to be as pleasing to them as influenza is to the apothecary.

New problems, gentlemen, new problems!

And as for our relationship with pigs, just consider

the relation of coal to diamond, and I think everyone will be satisfied—even the theologians.

What a magnificent prospect anyone has who spends his tender youth with those grunting coal-diamonds of the animal world! But I have often wondered that in the "Lives of Famous Men" we so seldom read of a school-teacher, for in the school all the ingredients of greatness are abounding.

The reverse is more often true. Every day we see banished princes teaching lazy boys. Dionysius and Louis Philippe are not the only ones. I myself once tried to teach an American French. It was no go.

If it should ever become customary again to elect kings, I hope the people will elect such persons as have studied men, just as one studies Geography on globes or maps. All virtues, propensities, passions, mistakes, misdeeds, knowledge of which is so indispensable in human society, can be studied much better in the schoolroom. The field is restricted, and can be taken in more readily. The famous statecraft of many a great man, if the truth were known, had its origin in that old tripping trick, which is everything to the three-foot Machiavellis.

The task of a schoolmaster is not an easy one. I have never understood why he is not better paid, or, since this must be so, why there are still men who prefer to teach, when on the same pay they might be corporals in the army, and teach the use of firearms, which offers fewer headaches and more fresh air.

I would even rather be a preacher; for he does work with people who are interested and come to hear him



of their own free will. The teacher has to fight continually with indifference, and with the extremely dangerous rivalry of tops, marbles, and paper-dolls—not to speak of candy, scarlatina and weak mothers.

Pennewip was a man of the old school. At least he would seem so to us if we could see him in his gray school jacket and short trousers with buckles, and his brown wig, which he was continually pushing into place. At the first of the week this was always curly, when it was not raining—rain isn't good for curls; and on Sundays "the man with the curling irons" came.

Antiquated? But perhaps this is only imagination. Who knows? perhaps in his day he was quite modern. How soon people will say the same of us! At all events, the man called himself "Master" and his school was a school and not an "Institute." It is no advance to call things by other than their right names. In his school boys and girls sat together indiscriminately, according to the naïve custom of those days. They learned, or might learn, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, National History, Psalmody, Sewing, Knitting, and Religion. These were the order of the day, but if anyone distinguished himself by a show of talent, diligence or good behavior, that one received special instruction in versification, an art in which Pennewip took great pleasure.

Thus he taught the boys till they were sufficiently advanced to be confirmed. With the help of his wife he gave the girls a "finishing course." They were graduated with a paternoster done in red on a black

background, or perhaps a pierced heart between two flower-pots. Then they were through and ready to become the grandmothers of their own generation.

There was no natural science then. Even to-day there is room for improvement along this line. It is said that some advance has been made recently. It is more useful for a child to know how corn grows than to be able to call the name of it in a foreign language. I don't say that either is incompatible with the other.

The public schools were most deficient at the time when Walter and Keesje were slowly crawling around the arena of honor; but I doubt if one could say much more of the "institutes" of to-day. I would advise everyone to visit such a school as he attended when a boy; and I am convinced that after this test many a father who has the welfare of his children at heart will prefer to keep them at home. One comes to the conclusion, that after all in the school of clever Master Miller, who was so clever that he got himself addressed as *M'sieu* Millaire, precious little was to be learned.

Failing to make this test we continue to believe in the infallibility of *M'sieu* of Millaire. We always consider that one a great man whom we have known in childhood and haven't seen since.

When I remarked a moment ago that school-teachers are paid so niggardly, I didn't mean that their remuneration was insufficient, considering the quality and quantity of the goods delivered—knowledge, scholarship, education. I only had in mind the bitterness of their lot, and the poor indemnity given to the man who spends his life in a wasp's nest.

In addition to versifying, Pennewip had still another hobby, which gave him more claim to a throne than did anything else. He was possessed with the mania for classifying, a passion known to few, but still of not infrequent occurrence. I have never quite understood the disease; and I gave up my search for the "first cause" as soon as I saw how difficult it is to get around with a hobby-horse taken from somebody else's stable. So I am going to give only a short sketch of Pennewip's harmless animal.

Everything that he saw, perceived, experienced he divided into families, classes, genera, species and subspecies, and made of the human race a sort of botanical garden, in which he was the *Linne*. He regarded that as the only possible way to grasp the final purpose of creation and clear up all obscure things, both in and out of school. He even went so far as to say that Walter's New Testament would have turned up again if Juffrouw Pieterse had only been able to tell to what class the man belonged who had bound the volume in black leather. But that was something she didn't know.

As for myself, I shouldn't have said a word about Pennewip's mania for classifying everything, if I hadn't thought it might help me to give the reader a better picture of our hero and his surroundings. I should have preferred to leave the said Pennewip in undisturbed intercourse with the muses; but we shall have occasion later to refer to his poetic art, when we shall quote some poems by his pupils.

After the usual general division into "animate" and "inanimate"—the good man gave the human

race only one soul—followed a system that looked like a pyramid. On the top was God with the angels and spirits and other accessories, while the oysters and polyps and mussels were crawling about down near the base, or lying still—just as they pleased. Half way up stood kings, members of school-boards, mayors, legislators, theologians and D.D.'s. Next under these were professors and merchants who do not work themselves. Then came doctors of things profane, *i. e.*, those driving double rigs, also lawyers and untitled preachers, the Colonel of the City Militia, the Rector of the Latin School. Philosophers (only those who have developed a system), doctors with one horse, doctors without any horse and poets were further down. Rather low down, and not far from the mussels, was the seventh sub-division of the third class of the "citizen population." Our hero would come under this sub-section.

#### CITIZEN POPULATION, CLASS III., 7TH SUB-DIVISION.

##### *People Living in Rented Flats.*

a. Entrance for tenants only. Three-window front. Two stories, with back-rooms. The boys sleep alone, dress, however, with the girls. Fresh straw in case a baby is born. Learning French, poems at Christmas. The girls are sometimes called Lena or Maria, but seldom Louise. Darning. The boys work in offices. One girl kept, sewing-girl, and "person for the rough work." Washing at home. Read sermons by Palm. Picked pork on Sundays, with table-cloth, liquor after coffee. Religion. Respectability.

*b 1.* Still three windows. One story. Neighbors live above who ring twice (*Vide b. 2*). Leentje, Mietje; Louise heard seldom. House-door opened with a cord, which is sleek from long use. Sleep in one room. Straw-heaps in cases of confinement. One maid-servant for everything. Sundays cheese, no liquor, but religion and respectability as above.

*b 2.* Neighbors who ring twice. About as above. No maid, only a "person for the rough work." Seamstress. White table-cloth. Cheese from time to time, only occasionally. Religion as above.

*c.* One story higher. Two-window front. Small projecting back-room. The entire family sleeps in two beds. No trace of straw. The boys are called Louw, Piet, or Gerrit, and become watchmakers or type-setters. A few become sailors. Continual wrangle with the neighbors about the waste-water. Religion as above. Associate with "respectable folk." Read "Harlemmer" with III. 7, b. 2. No maid, or person for rough work, but a seamstress on seven stivers and a piece of bread and butter.

That brings us to Juffrouw Pieterse.

The reader will now have a very good idea of Walter's environment, and will readily understand why I said he had a "city complexion." That was when we saw him in the Hartenstraat, on the road to fame, or on the road to that nameless "other thing" of Juffrouw Laps. At all events he was on his way to things that will occupy our attention for some time yet.

## CHAPTER VI

IT was Wednesday, and the Pieterses were going to give a party. Juffrouw Laps had been invited, also the Juffrouw living over the dairy, whose husband was employed at the "bourse." Further Mrs. Stotter, who had been a midwife for so long and was still merely "very respectable." Then the widow Zipperman, whose daughter had married some fellow in the insurance business, or something of the kind. Also the baker's wife. That was unavoidable: it was impossible to buy all kinds of pastry and cakes without her finding out what was up. Then the Juffrouw living below and to the rear. Of course she wouldn't come, but the Pieterses wanted to show that they had forgotten the late quarrel over the broken window-pane. If she didn't come that was the end of the matter, so far as Juffrouw Pieterse was concerned. She would have nothing more to do with the Juffrouw from below. I may add that the lady from below did not come, and that her name was stricken from the calling-list of those higher up.

The children were to go to bed early, with the promise of a cup of sage-milk for breakfast if they would not make any noise the entire evening. This drink largely took the place of tea then. It was thought that the "noise" made by children would not be appreciated. Walter got permission to go play

with the Halleman boys, who were thought to be very respectable. He must be at home by eight o'clock; but this was said in a tone that gave him no cause to fear a reprimand in case he should stay out later. Laurens, who of course was an apprentice to a printer, and usually came home about seven o'clock in the evening, was big enough to be present with the guests, but must promise to sit still and drink only two glasses. The big girls were to be present as a matter of course: They had been confirmed. Stoffel presided. His business was to meet the gentlemen when they came for the ladies about ten o'clock, and entertain the company with stories of Mungo Park.

Leentje was to remain till the people were all there, as it was so inconvenient to have to open the door every time. She could make herself useful in arranging the table and doing other things incident to such occasions. But she "must move about a little brisker," otherwise they would prefer to do everything themselves.

The eldest of the girls, Juffrouw Truitje, must look after the "sage-milk." Pietje had charge of the sandwiches; but Myntje was to see to it that the butter was spread a little thicker, for the last time the bread had been too dry.

Everything was going to turn out so nicely, "if only Juffrouw Laps wouldn't talk so much." That was her failing. And, too, they hoped that the widow Zipperman would "brag a little less about her son-in-law." This was considered a source of weariness. And the Juffrouw who lived over the dairy "might be more modest." She had "never lived in such a fine

house" ; and as for the shop—that was no disgrace ; and on the top floor—but one cannot tell how it will be.

No one understood why the baker's wife used so many French words, which was not becoming in one of her station. " If she does it this evening, Stoffel, say something to me that she can't understand, then she will find out that we are not ' from the street,' that we know what's what."

" It's all the same to me," Juffrouw Pieterse continued, " whether the Juffrouw downstairs comes or not. I don't care a fig about it.—Four, five—Louw can sit there, but he must keep his legs still—and a chair there—yes—so! It's a good thing she's not coming ; it would have been too crowded. Leentje, go to work—do blow your nose! No, run over to Juffrouw Laps's and ask the Juffrouw if the Juffrouw could spare a few stools—without backs, you understand ; because the chairs there by the chimney—yes, ask the Juffrouw for a few stools, and tell the Juffrouw that they are for me, and that I expect the Juffrouws about seven. Give my compliments to the Juffrouw and wipe your nose."

Juffrouw Pieterse didn't like to use personal pronouns ; it was impolite.

On this afternoon Walter went to his bridge early. It was now not so useless as usual, for the rain of the day before had filled the ditch with water, which was even running, so that the straws which Walter thoughtlessly, or full of thought—both are about the same thing—threw into the water were carried down to the pond, where the logs lay that were to be sawed up by the " Eagle " and the " Early Hour." These



were the names of the sawmills that for some weeks had been the witnesses of Walter's daydreams.

Glorioso was gone, and could not be replaced; but on those afternoons when he was free Walter returned involuntarily to the spot where he had had his first glimpse of the world of romance. How rough and crude the colors in that first picture! Perhaps it was the very roughness of the colors that attracted him and changed him, till he could not conceive how he had ever found enjoyment in the little cakes on the corner.

A peculiar prospective had opened up before him. He dreamed of things that he could not name; but they made him bitterly dissatisfied with his present condition. He was anxious to do everything prescribed to get to Heaven; but he thought it would be much easier to pray in such a cave with wax candles. And as for honoring his mother, a point upon which she always laid great stress—why didn't she have a train like the countess? Certainly he ought not to have sold the Bible; and he wouldn't do it any more—he had vowed it; but then he ought to have had a box filled with florins, and a feather in his cap, just as it was in the book.

He was disgusted with his brother Stoffel, and his sisters, and Juffrouw Laps, and the preacher and everything. He couldn't understand why the whole family didn't go to Italy and form a respectable robber-band. But Pennewip and Keesje shouldn't go; that was certain.

He wondered what had become of his verses. Every Wednesday such pupils as had been well-be-

haved, and, for that reason, deemed worthy to contest for the "laurel," handed in a poem written on some subject suggested by the teacher. This time the subject assigned to Walter was "Goodness," which probably had some reference to his former behavior, and was a hint for the improvement of his moral character. But Walter had already put goodness into rhyme so often, and found the subject so dry and tedious and worn-out that he had taken the liberty of "singing" something else. He selected the theme nearest his heart—robbers!

Like all authors he was greatly infatuated with his work. He was convinced that the teacher, too, would see the excellencies of his poem and forgive him for deviating from the path of goodness. The verses would undoubtedly be sent to the mayor, and he would pass them on to the Pope, who would then summon Walter and appoint him "Court-robber."

And thus he dreamed and threw his straws into the stream. They moved away slowly and disappeared between the moss-covered timbers. Involuntarily his fancy had transmuted them into the characters of his world of romance. There went the countess with her long train, which got caught in the moss and held the countess fast. The virtuous Amalia met with no better luck; she got tangled up in the water lentils. And now came Walter himself. He approached Amalia, in her green robes, and was just about to rescue her, when he was swallowed by a duck. This was most unkind of the duck, for it was Walter's last stalk of grass; and now in the rattling and buzzing

of the sawmills below he could hear Amalia repeating in a reproachful voice:

“Warre, warre, warre, we;  
Where is warre, warre, wall—  
Walter, who will rescue me?”

This annoyed him, and he could not resist the temptation to throw a rock at the duck whose greediness had caused Amalia to doubt his chivalry.

The duck chose the better part, and retired after she had done Walter all the damage she could. But the sawmills paid no attention to these happenings and continued to rattle away.

Walter heard now in the noisy clatter of the mills all kinds of songs and stories, and, listening to these, he soon forgot Amalia and the Pope. That the reader may not get a wrong impression of these mills, I hasten to say that there was really nothing extraordinary about them. They buzzed and rattled just like other sawmills.

It often happens that we think we perceive something which comes from the external world, when in fact it is only a subjective product in ourselves. Similarly, we may think we have just imagined something, when really it came to us from the world of the senses.

This is a kind of ventriloquism that often gives cause for annoyance and enmity.

I wonder which turns the faster?—Walter listened to the mills. Now—I think—no, begin together. Good! No, the Eagle was ahead! Once more—now!

Which will get there first? No, that won't do. Once more together. Look sharp, Morning Hour,—

out again! I can't hold my eye on it—what a whirling and buzzing!

You are tired, are you? I believe it.

If I might only sit on such a big wing, wouldn't I hold on tight? And wouldn't the sawyer look?

Why are you called "Morning Hour"? Have you gold in your mouth? And "Eagle"! Can you fly? Take me with you. What a big play-ground up there, and no school!

I wonder how the first school began. Which came first, the school, or the teacher? But the first teacher must have attended a school. And the first school must have had a teacher.

So the first school must have just started itself. But that is impossible. "Eagle," can you turn yourself?—with the wind? Can you turn yourself some other way? Try it. Beat "Morning Hour." Quick, quick—beautiful!

Now, once more alone. Good!

Now, together again! Karre, karre, kra, kra—stretch your arms out and take me with you. Will you? Put your hat on, Eagle; how the ribbons fly.—Who are you? Warre, warre, ware, wan—I can't help it; it was the duck. Tell me what your name is. Fanny, fanny, fanny, fan— Is your name fan? And you, Morning Hour, what is your name? Ceny, ceny, ceny, ce. What kind of a name is Ce? Now together—sing a song together:

Fanny, fanny, fanny, fan—  
 Ceny, ceny, ceny, ce—  
 Fanny, ceny, fanny, ceny,  
 Fanny, ceny, fan—cy.

Fancy—what do you mean by that? Is that the name of both of you? And what is it? Has it wings?

“Morning Hour” and “Eagle” had fused into something that had wings and was called fancy.

Fancy lifted Walter up and bore him away.

When she brought him back to the bridge again it had already been dark for a long time. He shook himself as if he were wet, rubbed his eyes and started home. We shall see later what awaited him there; but first we must go back a few hours. I hope the reader will not disdain an invitation to Juffrouw Pieterse's. Remember that her husband never made anything, but bought everything ready-made in Paris.

In passing by I should like to make Master Penne-wip a short visit.

## CHAPTER VII

SCHOOL was out; and the seats looked as if the pupils had just left the tediousness of it all lying there. The map of Europe looked down peevishly on the heap of writing-pads. There lay the mutilated and well-worn goose-quills, which since time immemorial have opened up the gates of learning. True, the black-board vaunted itself with the heavy results of the last lesson in "fractions"; but the school was no more. The spirit had fled: It was a corpse.

Yes, the "Geist" had gone out with the children; for the reader will see in a moment that they carried about with them a tremendous amount of that article.

We already know that this was the great day when Pennewip was to criticise the poetical effusions of his young geniuses. There he sat, his restless wig sharing all the poetical feelings and emotions—and motions—of its owner. We will just look over his shoulder and read with him those inestimable treasures of poetic art; and perhaps we too shall be moved to emotion.

Wig: In the middle, resting quietly.

LUCAS DE BRYER: "Our Native Land."

Cake and wine and native land,  
Out in the moonlight I take my stand;  
Our native land and cake and wine,  
And I hope the moon will shine;  
Five fingers have I on my hand,  
All to honor our native land.

“Melodious,” said the teacher, “very melodious; and very profound. Cake and wine, with our native land as a climax.”

Wig: On the right side.

LIZZIE WEBBELAR: “My Father’s Vocation.”

The cat is sly, I know;  
My father is a dealer in Po-  
Tatoes and onions.

“Original, immediate! But I don’t like the way she cuts her potatoes in twain.”

Wig: On the left side.

JEANETTE RUST: “The Weather-cock.”

He stands on the chimney since long ago,  
And shows the wind which way to blow.

“Smooth, but not quite correct, for examined closely—but I’ll let it pass as poetic license.”

Wig: Down in front.

LEENDERT SNELLEMAN: “Lent.”

In Lent it is always nice,  
My brother’s birth-day is in May,  
He says his feet need warming,  
So that Lent we must be praising,  
And then we’re going to celebrate,  
Easter brings eggs and a holiday.

“It’s too bad that he’s so careless with his rhymes. His imagination is extraordinary. Very original.”

Wig: Down on his neck.

KEESJE, THE BUTCHER'S BOY: "In Praise of the Teacher."

My father has slaughtered many a steer,  
 But Master Pennewip is still living, I hear;  
 Some are lean, and some are well-fed,  
 He has slipped his wig to the side of his head.

The wig actually went to the side of his head.

"Well, this is curious. I hardly know what to say about it."

The wig slipped to the other side.

"What's the connection between me and steers?"

The wig protested vigorously against any implication of relationship with steers.

"H—mm! Can it be that this is what our new-fangled writers call humour?"

The wig sank down to his eyebrows, which signified doubt.

"I will call up the boy and——"

The wig passed again to the zenith, to express its satisfaction with the teacher's determination to interview the butcher's boy.

LUCAS DE WILDE: "Religion."

Religion very nice must be,  
 Much it pleases the people we see.

"The fundamental idea is very beautiful," said the teacher, "but it ought to have been developed better."

The wig nodded acquiescence.

TRUDIE GIER: "Juffrouw Pennewip."

The path of virtue she shows us each day,  
 And we are glad to go that way;  
 And as there's nothing to do more fitting,  
 She teaches us sewing, darning and knitting.



The wig fairly leaped with pleasure, and the curls embraced one another. This out-pouring of Trudie's heart was borne at once to Juffrouw Pennewip, and was later hung by the fireplace in honor of the poetess and the subject of the poem.

Then followed a sublime poem on God by Klaasje van der Gracht, the son of the Catechist. He was thirteen years old, and had not been vaccinated—out of regard for predestination.

“If only his father didn't help him!”

The wig was rigid with astonishment.

LOUWTJE DE WILDE: “Friendship.”

Friendship very nice must be,  
Much it pleases the people we see.

The wig seemed dissatisfied. The “Religion” of Lucas de Wilde was pulled out and compared with Louwtje's “Friendship.”

“H—emm. It is possible. Another example of how one thought can originate in two heads at the same time.”

WIMPJE DE WILDE: “Fishing.”

Fishing very—

“What's that?”

Yes, really, there it was again:

Fishing very nice must be,  
Much it pleases the people we see.

The wig was moving continually. It looked as if it were fishing too.

The teacher looked hurriedly through the remain-

ing poems and picked out the offspring of the entire Wilde connection. His worst suspicions were realized. Mietje de Wilde, Kees de Wilde, Piet and Jan de Wilde—all uniformly declared that religion, friendship, fishing, dreaming, cauliflower and deception “very nice must be,” and that they were also very pleasing “to the people we see.” A regular flood of the nice and pleasing.

Now, what do you suppose the wig did? It did the best thing that could be done under the circumstances. More could not be expected of a wig. As soon as it saw the futility of its efforts to comprehend the difference between fishing, friendship, deception, dreams, religion and cauliflower, it merely ignored the whole matter, readjusted itself and assumed an expression of expectancy for what was yet to come.

LEENTJE DE HAAS: “Admiral de Ruyter.”

Pulling the rope with emotion,  
To the top of the mast he came,  
And then he went to the ocean,  
And won for himself great fame.

And very much more he perfected,  
Saleh he vanquished, too;  
A hero he was then elected,  
With nothing else to do.

The wig lifted itself, the curls applauding enthusiastically. It was evidently pleased.

GRETE WAUZER: “The Caterpillar.”

The caterpillar, free from care,  
Crawls on the tree just over there.

Descriptive poetry. A daring idea—the caterpillar crawling on the tree free from care.”

Wig: Quiet.

Ah, the pleasure of a wig is short-lived! And how soon was this one—but I will not anticipate. Soon, all too soon, the reader will know the worst.

WALTER PIETERSE: “A Robber Song.”

“Aha, what’s this? And ‘goodness’? But where has he written on goodness?”

The teacher could scarcely believe his eyes. He turned the sheet of paper over and examined the back side, hoping to discover there some lines on goodness.

Then he saw that on Walter’s sheet there was not a trace of “goodness.”

Oh, wretched wig!

Yes, wretched wig! For after it had suffered as never wig had suffered before, after it had been pulled at and tugged at and martyred in a manner beyond even the imagination of the Wilde family, Master Pennewip snatched it from his head, twisted it convulsively in his hands, stammered a short “Heaven-human-Christian-soul-good-gracious-my-life—how is it possible!” slapped it on his head again, covered it with his venerable cap and burst out the door like one possessed.

He was on his way to Walter’s home, where we shall soon see him arrive. As a conscientious historian, however, it will be my duty first to give an account of the happenings there.

## CHAPTER VIII

**G**OODNESS, I'm glad to see you! And so early, too! Leetje, place a chair over there and get the footstool, but be in a hurry, or I'd rather do it myself. And how are you? Juffrouw Laps is coming too, you know—Myntje, you'd better be thinking of your dough and stop combing your head. That girl can't keep her hands off of her hair when there's company. But do take a seat—no, not in the corner; there's a draft there."

There was no more draft in this corner than is usual to corners; but Mrs. Stotter was only a *Vrouw*, and not a "Juffrouw." She had no right to the seat of honour; for on all occasions a Juffrouw takes precedence of a *Vrouw*, just as a *Mevrouw* takes precedence of a Juffrouw. Everyone must keep his place, especially those in III, 7, b1; or c., where etiquette is observed more closely than at the court of Madrid. The care and anxiety of the mistress of ceremonies make her work most trying, and, too, not merely for Juffrouw Pieterse.

"Ah, my dear Juffrouw Pieterse, I was so surprised when Louwie came to invite me, for I had just remarked to Wimpje, who makes caps, you know—no, thank you, Pietje, I don't care for any just now—I said to Wimpje, I wonder what Juffrouw Pieterse is doing, for I hadn't heard from you in so long, you know—yes, just throw it aside, it's my old one; I

knew you wouldn't mind my wearing my old one—and then Wimpje said——”

What Wimpje really said I don't know. Mrs. Stotter's garment, which she had described as her “old one,” was removed and placed on the foot of the bed in the back room. The children, who were piled together there like sardines, were duly admonished not to stretch out their feet, lest in doing so they injure Mrs. Stotter's “old” garment.

“And now, my dear, be seated—yes, that's for us, twice already. Leentje, where are you hiding now? Can't you hear that somebody is ringing?—It's probably Juffrouw Zipperman. Juffrouw Zipperman is coming, too, you know.”

Again I am at a loss: I don't know whether it was Juffrouw Zipperman who had rung, or somebody else. But the reader need not scold me for writing a story that I don't know myself. I cannot be sure whether it was Juffrouw Zipperman this time or Juffrouw Mabbel, from the bakery, or Juffrouw Krummel, whose husband is at the bourse, or Juffrouw Laps—but she didn't need to ring, as she lived in the house. Anyway, by half past seven the entire company was assembled, and Stoffel was smoking his pipe as if his life depended upon it. Leentje had gone home without her piece of bread and butter. She “could get it to-morrow”; to-day there was “so much to do,” and “one can't do everything at once, you know.”

“And then she got another one right away—don't you know? One with a wart on her nose.”

“Ah, it's an ordeal one has with girls,” said Juffrouw Pieterse. “Take another piece, don't wait

to be insisted upon; it's a cake from your own dough."

"Excusez," said the Juffrouw from the bakery, with a mouth like a rabbit, a style of mouth signifying graciousness and good breeding.

"You must eat more, or I shall think you don't like it." She had baked it herself.

"Then I cannot refuse, Juffrouw Pieterse. Obligé and many thanks."

"And you, Juffrouw Laps, what can I pass you?" Juffrouw Laps selected ginger cake.

"Fill the cups, Trudie! Yes, Mrs. Stotter, when you are here you must drink with us. You are welcome to anything we've got. Pietje, wipe off a table—such a girl! And now go and look after the baby, and tell her that I don't want to hear any more noise. Ah, Juffrouw Mabbel, children are a great deal of trouble. And your little Sientje—how is her cough now?"

"We've got a magnetisier, but that isn't enough. We must have the clairvoyange of the sonnebule."

"You don't say so! One can hardly believe it. And when is he coming, the cler—cleek—clar——"

"It's in the nerves, Juffrouw Zipperman. But he has the little nightcap and nightgown, in which she has sweated, you know; and he says that it will come all right now."

"Who would have thought it! What will you do now?"

"That's just it; the sonnebule must tell us what to do."

Juffrouw Laps could not agree to this.

"I wouldn't do it—I wouldn't do it—not for any-

thing in the world! I tell you, what God does is all right. Just mark my words!"

"Yes, Juffrouw Laps; but the Juffrouw at the provision store did it, and her child is lots better."

"That's what *you* say, Juffrouw Mabbel, but I tell you there is something in her eye that I don't like."

"What then, Juffrouw Laps?"

"She has a look, a look—and it's sin—I tell you it is. It's wrong, it won't do. What God does is all right."

"Come, Stoffel, talk some. You sit there like a stone. Recite a poem, or tell us something about your school. Would you believe it, Juffrouw Mabbel, he knows a whole poem by heart. And he has memorized all the verbs of the feminine gender."

"Mother, what are you talking about?" said Stoffel, displeased. "Don't you see I'm smoking?"

"Yes, dear, I meant when you were through smoking. Then you can repeat the words. You will be surprised, Juffrouw Zipperman, and wonder where he learned it all. How does it go? 'I would have been drunk, he would have been drunk'—of course, you know, he was not drunk, it belongs with the verbs. You will kill yourself laughing when he begins. Fill the cups, Trudie, and blow in the spout; there's a leaf over it."

The reader will not take it amiss, I trust, if I pass over the subsequent history of this leaf, and, too, make some deviations from the text of the conversation during the further course of Juffrouw Pieterse's tea-evening. Stoffel spun off his conjugations and the ladies fairly shrieked when he related how "he had

been drunk" and that "he would be drunk." Thereupon followed general and particular criticism of the neighbors. The Juffrouw below received her share, as a matter of course: She was absent.

Religion and faith play an important part. Juffrouw Laps was for organizing a prayer-class. The preachers of to-day, she insisted, take their work too lightly and don't sweep out all the corners.

"I tell you, it's in the Bible that man is only man," she cried; "that's what I want to tell you. Man must not try to know better than God himself. Salvation comes through grace, and grace through faith; but if a man is not chosen, then he has no grace and can have no faith. That's the way he is damned, don't you see? I tell you, it's just as certain as twice two—understand? And for that reason I want to have a prayer-class. Not for the sake of money or profit—God help me, no! At most just a trifle for the fair, or for New Year. What do you think of the plan, Juffrouw Mabbel?"

That lady expressed the opinion that her husband would be opposed to it, for he liked to go out of evenings, and then she must stay in the shop. Besides, it was so difficult to get through with the work. No one could imagine what a laborious occupation baking was.

"What do you say, Juffrouw Zipperman? Don't you think it would be a go? I would serve coffee; and the people could leave something on the saucers. Really, I am not doing it for the money. We would begin with the Old Testament—and then—exercise, you know; practice—understand?"



Juffrouw Zipperman thought it would be very nice ; but her son-in-law had said that the preachers are paid to do this, and that any additional "exercise" was merely an unnecessary expense.

"What do you say to it, Juffrouw Krummel? Don't you think that such a class—just a small class——"

Juffrouw Krummel said she practiced with her husband when he came from the bourse.

Juffrouw Laps was now forced to turn to Mrs. Stotter, though she felt that she was letting herself down in appealing to a Vrouw.

"Ah, my dear Juffrouw Laps, if you had been a midwife as long as I have you'd take no interest in a prayer-class. Now there is M'neer Littelman in Prince Street. I've been at his house—always in respectable houses—and he always said—it's a house with high steps, and in the hall there's a big clock about the wind and rain—and he always said: 'Vrouw Stotter,' said he, 'you're a good woman,' said he, 'and a faithful midwife. I always tell the people that,' said he, 'and,' said he, 'all of my connection must send for you,' said he, 'but,' said he, 'when people tell you this you must act as if you didn't hear it'—thank you, Juffrouw Pieterse, my cup is turned over. Just as I said: Everyone must know what he's doing."

"But just a little exercise like that, Mrs. Stotter!"

"It's possible, it's possible. But I've had so much experience in such things. I go my own way; and that's the best way, too. For I've been in the home of M'neer Witte, who has an uncle in congress—for I always go to respectable places—and he always said, because he's so funny: 'Child-woman, child-

woman, you're nothing but a child-woman.' I was just going to say that I know what I'm doing, for I've seen a lot in my life. There's M'neer—what's his name? There in Prince Street—no, no Market Square. Oh, what is his name!"

The reader will have noticed that Mrs. Stotter digressed from the theme. But other folk do the same.

"And Juffrouw Pieterse, what do you think of the idea? Just a little exercise."

"Ah, my dear, I have exercise enough with my children. You don't know what it means to bring up nine. I always worship with the children, for the Bible says—Trudie, go to the baby; I hear her again."

There was something noble in Trudie's gait as she walked into that back room. One could see that she felt flattered by the transmission to her of maternal dignity. Little Kee, the baby, was less flattered.

"What were we talking about? Yes, that is my religious service. The children keep me busy. You don't know anything about it; if I bring them up properly—run, Pietje, and straighten out Simon. He's pinching his sister again; he always does it when there's company."

Simon was straightened out.

"Whenever we have company the children behave so badly. There it goes again. Myntje, go and see what's the matter and tell them to go to sleep."

Myntje went, returning immediately with the report that they had "turned something over."

General indignation. Angry message from the Juffrouw below. It was unpleasant for the Juffrouw below when the children of the Juffrouw above turned

over things and flooded the back room. Terrible excitement.

Finally the children were straightened out.

Juffrouw Zipperman again sat in the corner where there was such a "draft." This only goes to show that earthly greatness has its dark side, and that a son-in-law in the insurance business entitles one to rheumatism.

Juffrouw Laps was greatly pleased with the hearty manner in which punishment was meted out to the children. It was exactly according to Scripture, she said; and then she cited a text or two in which the rod was prescribed. It's in the Bible somewhere, I don't know where. The Bible mentions everything, and the "rod" especially.

"Now, Stoffel," said the hostess sweetly, "recite something for us." She wanted to show that her children could do something else besides pinch and turn things over.

"I don't know anything," said Stoffel, but without a trace of Socratic arrogance.

"Just say for us what you said the other day. Come, Stoffel. That's the way he always is, Juffrouw Mabbel. One has to pull him up on his feet before he will do anything. But then he goes all right. Forward, Stoffel! He's tired now. Teaching in such a school is hard work. Yes, Juffrouw, he's as smart as he can be. Would you believe it? All words are either masculine or feminine. Aren't they, Stoffel?"

"No, mother."

"No? But—and the other day you said—it's only to get him started, you know, Juffrouw Zipperman.

it takes a little time, because he's worn out with his school work—but you said that all words——”

“No, mother. Masculine, feminine or neuter, I said.”

“Yes, and still more,” said Juffrouw Pieterse: “You will be astonished when you hear him. What do you suppose you are, Juffrouw Krummel?”

“I? What I am?”

“Yes, yes, what you are—what you really are.”

“I am Juffrouw Krummel,” she said, but doubtfully; for she read in the triumphant look of Juffrouw Pieterse and the tightly closed lips of Stoffel that she might easily be something entirely different from Juffrouw Krummel.

The tension did not need to be farther increased; so Juffrouw Pieterse passed now from the special to the general. Her glance took in the entire company.

“And you, too, Juffrouw Mabbel; and you, Juffrouw Laps; and you, Juffrouw Zipperman; and you, Mrs. Stotter—what do you all think you are?”

No one knew.

This will not be surprising to anyone who knows how difficult knowledge of the “self” is; but Stoffel had something else in mind. There was a deeper meaning involved.

Juffrouw Laps was the first to answer, and she spoke with proud self-sufficiency:

“I am Juffrouw Laps!”

“Wrong, wrong—entirely wrong!”

“But for Heaven sake, am I not Juffrouw Laps?”

“Y-e-s. Of course you are Juffrouw Laps; but

Stoffel didn't ask who you were, but what you were. There's the fine point."

"What I am? I'm Dutch Reform!"

"Y-e-s. That you are, too; but—it isn't that. The question is, What *are* you? Help her out, Stoffel."

Between puffs of smoke, and with the air of a professor, Stoffel proceeded to "help":

"Juffrouw Laps, I wished to know what you were from a zoölogical standpoint."

"I won't have anything more to do with it," said Juffrouw Laps in the tone of one who feels that he is going to be insulted.

"I am a midwife," said Mrs. Stotter, "and I'm going to stick to it."

"And I am the baker's wife," cried Juffrouw Mabel, with a positiveness in her tone which showed her intention to hold to this opinion.

"Certainly, certainly, Juffrouw Mabel; but I mean from a zoölogical standpoint."

"If it's going to be indecent, I prefer to go home."

"I, too," added Juffrouw Krummel and Zipperman. "We came here to be entertained."

"But you're not going to get angry about it! I tell you, it's in the book, Stoffel—you will laugh when you hear it, Juffrouw Mabel; and the best part of it is, that it's in the book, and one can't say anything against it. Tell her, Stoffel!"

"Juffrouw Laps," said Stoffel with dignity—an important moment in Juffrouw Pieterse's tea-evening had arrived—"Juffrouw Laps, you are a *sucking animal*."

I admit frankly that I cannot adequately describe

the crisis that followed these two words. If Stoffel had only said mammal, perhaps then my task would have been easier.

Juffrouw Laps's face took on all the different colors that are generally supposed to express anger. She had been attacked more openly than the others, it is true; but her attitude toward the prayer-class would go to show that she was naturally polemical.

In French novels people used to turn green; but Juffrouw Laps did not read French, so she stopped at a terrible violet and screamed—no, she didn't. She didn't scream anything; for she was choking for breath. But she did pulverize that piece of ginger cake; and she looked at Stoffel and his mother in a manner that would have been most damaging for her if those two persons had happened to die that night.

Imitating the trick of the cuttle-fish, no doubt unconsciously, Stoffel managed to escape this fatal stare by enveloping himself in a heavy cloud of smoke. Juffrouw Pieterse, however, not being a smoker, was at the mercy of Juffrouw Laps. She stammered humbly: "It's in the book, really it's in the book. Don't be angry, it's in the book."

By this time Juffrouw Laps was getting a little air, so much that there was now no danger of her suffocating. She threw the mutilated remains of the ginger cake on the table and began:

"Juffrouw Pieterse, you are nothing but a low, vile, filthy—you may even be a sucking animal, you and your son too. I want you to understand that I've always been respectable. My father sold grain, and nobody's ever been able to say anything against me!

Ask everybody about me—if I've ever run with men-folk, and such things; and if I haven't always paid my debts. He was manager I would have you understand, and we lived over the chapter-house, for he was in the grain business, and you can ask about me there. Thank God, you can ask about me everywhere—do you hear? But never, never, never, has such a thing happened to me. What you put on me! If it wasn't for lowering myself I'd tell you what I think of you—you sucking animal, you and your son and your whole family. My father sold grain, and I'm too resectable for you to——”

“But—it's in the book that way. For God's sake believe me; it's in the book.”

“Just hold your lip about your book. Anybody who sells God's holy word on the Ouwebrug needn't talk to me about books.”

This accusation was false; for Walter, and not his mother, had sold the Bible; but this was no time for such fine distinctions.

“Stoffel, go get the book and show Juffrouw—my God, what shall I do!”

“Go to the Devil with your book and your sucking animals. You've got nothing to show in your book. I know you—and your lout of a son, and your wenches of daughters, that are growing up like——”

Truitje, Myntje and Pietje, understanding from this that there was something radically wrong with their growth, began to screech too. Other members of the party bawled a word from time to time, as opportunity presented itself. Then came another message from the Juffrouw below. This time she threatened to

call in the police. The children, taking advantage of the general excitement to break the ban under which they had been placed, had left the bed and were now listening at the keyhole. Juffrouw Pieterse was calling for the camphor bottle, declaring that she was going to die; Mrs. Stotter was clamoring for her wrap—her “old one”; and Stoffel was playing cuttlefish as well as he could.

All had got up and were going to leave. They could “put up with a good deal,” but that was “too much”! Juffrouw Krummel was going to tell her husband; Juffrouw Zipperman was going to let everybody in the insurance business know about it; Mrs. Stotter was going to relate the whole story to the gentleman in Prince Street; and Juffrouw Mabbel—I forget whom she was going to tell it all to. In short, every one of them was going to see to it that the affair was well aired.

Who knows but what these threats would have been carried out, if the good genius of the Pieterses had not at that moment caused someone to ring the doorbell? It was that worthy gentleman whom we left in such a state of pious despair at the close of the last chapter.



## CHAPTER IX

**Y**ES, the door-bell rang. And it rang again: So it was "for us." Juffrouw Pieterse drew a long breath; and I must say, she did a very proper thing. While admitting that it is foolish to say what one would do if one were somebody else, still, in her place I should have drawn a long breath, too. Firstly, because I imagine she hadn't done this for a long time; secondly, because I know how, in adverse circumstances, every change and interruption gives one ground for hope; and, finally, because I think Juffrouw Pieterse was human, just like the rest of us.

"Ah, my dears," she said, "be peaceable. It must be the gentlemen."

The ladies declared it couldn't be the gentlemen, because it was too early for them; and this very doubt and uncertainty as to who it might be gave the crisis a favorable turn.

Mere uncertainty, even when in no way connected with what is occupying us, has a sort of paralyzing effect. Besides, when one is interrupted in one's anger, afterwards it is difficult to find the place where one left off.

This was Juffrouw Laps's experience; she tried it, but it wouldn't work. Her "a sucking animal, a sucking animal!" was smothered by, "What can it mean? He never comes before ten!"

Juffrouw Pieterse quickly availed herself of this diversion to get them all seated again.

Trudie was commissioned to "straighten out" the children, who came off rather badly. The hostess was just about to state a new zoölogical argument, which should establish peace between the hostile parties, when the door opened and Master Pennewip stood before the agitated assembly.

He, too, was agitated: the reader knows it.

The surprise caused by the arrival of this unexpected visitor had a most favorable effect on the peace negotiations. A truce was tacitly declared, though not without the proviso, at least on Juffrouw Laps's part, that hostilities should be reopened as soon as curiosity as to Pennewip's visit had been sufficiently satisfied. Indeed, she was all the more willing for a truce, as it was evident from the man's appearance that there was something momentous at hand. His wig cried out fire and murder in unmistakable tones. And that was just what the good Juffrouw Laps liked.

"Good-evening, Juffrouw Pieterse; my humblest respects. I see you have company, but——"

"That 'doesn't make a bit of difference,' Master Pennewip. 'Come right in and take a seat.'"

These forms of expression were rigidly observed in the "citizen populace," III, 7. c.

"Won't you drink a cup with us?"

"Juffrouw Pieterse," he said with extreme dignity, "I didn't come here simply to drink a cup of sage-milk."

"But, Master Pennewip, please be seated!"

It wasn't easy; but the ladies made room and he was soon seated.

He cleared up his throat and looked about him with dignity. Then he drew a roll of manuscript from his pocket, disarranged his wig and spoke:

"Juffrouw Pieterse! You are a worthy, respectable woman, and your husband sold shoes——"

Juffrouw Pieterse looked triumphantly at Juffrouw Laps.

"Yes, Master Pennewip, quite so; he did——"

"Don't interrupt me, Juffrouw Pieterse. Your departed husband sold shoes. I have taught your children from little tots up to their confirmation. Haven't I, Juffrouw Pieterse?"

"Yes, Master Pennewip," she replied modestly; for she was afraid of that excessive dignity in Pennewip's manner and voice.

"And I just want to ask you, Juffrouw Pieterse, whether, during all this time that your children were in my school, you ever heard any complaints—reasonable complaints—of the manner in which I, with my wife, instructed your children in reading, writing, arithmetic, national history, psalmody, sewing, knitting, drawing and religion? I put the question to you, Juffrouw Pieterse, and wait for a reply."

An awful silence followed this speech. The Juffrouw below had every reason to be satisfied.

"But, Master Pennewip——"

"I don't want any 'but,' Juffrouw Pieterse. I ask you, whether you have had any complaints. I

mean, of course, well grounded complaints about my instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic——”

“ Well, no, Master Pennewip, I have no complaints; but——”

“ So-oo? No complaints? Well, then I will explain to you—where is your son Walter?”

“ Walter? Dear me! Hasn't he come home, Trudie? He went to take a walk with the Halleman boys. They are such respectable children, Master Pennewip, and they live——”

“ So! With the Hallemans—who go to the French school! Aha, and that's it? So—from the Halle-mans! And he learns such things from the Halle-mans—the Halle-mans *III*, 7,  $a^2$ , perhaps 'a'—yes, who knows but that it might be *II*. It's no wonder—immorality, viciousness—at the French school! And now, Juffrouw Pieterse, I want to tell you that your son——”

“ What did you say?”

Master Pennewip looked about him as if he were drinking in the breathless silence that had fallen over his hearers.

Juffrouw Laps hastened to repay with compound interest that triumphant look of the hostess, while that lady, thoroughly miserable, was making frequent use of the camphor bottle. She was not so much mortified that Juffrouw Laps should hear something else unfavorable about Walter, who had caused them so much trouble, as angry that she should be the witness of an accusation that would give her a new weapon in the zoölogical fray.

“ Didn't I tell you so? Nothing good will ever

come to this Walter. A boy that begins with the Bible will end with something else. Yes, Master Pennewip, I'm not surprised—I shouldn't be surprised at anything he did. I've seen it coming for a long time. But what shouldn't one expect from a family——”

As quick as a flash Juffrouw Pieterse saw here her opportunity to recover her lost advantage. Stoffel had said it was in the book; but a teacher must know whatever is in a book. Therefore——

“Master Pennewip,” she cried, “Is it true that Juffrouw Laps is a sucking animal?”

I am convinced that Pennewip brought this question under a special category for “peculiar overflowings of the heart,” seeing that it followed upon his unfinished accusation against Walter. He looked over his glasses and slowly described with his eye a circle, peopled with women holding their breath, heads and necks stretched out and mouths wide open. The attitude of Juffrouw Laps was threatening above everything else, and said quite distinctly: Answer or die! Am I a sucking animal?

“With whom have I the honor to speak?” he asked, probably not considering that this question made the matter still more mysterious, giving the impression that Laps's animal quality depended upon her name, age, place of residence, family relations, etc.

“I am Juffrouw Laps,” she said, “and live down stairs in the front part of the house.”

“Ah—so! Yes, indeed you belong to the class of sucking animals.”

A ten-fold sigh was heaved; and Juffrouw Pieterse was again triumphant. In politics and the citizen

populace complete equilibrium is impossible. The parties or powers are in continual motion, first one in the ascendency, then the other.

Juffrouw Laps, who had not been able to accomplish anything with pride, now attempted good humor.

“But Master Pennewip,” she said sweetly, “how can you say such a thing? My father was in the grain business and——”

“Juffrouw Laps, answer me one question.”

“Yes, Master Pennewip, but——”

“Answer me, Juffrouw Laps, where do you live?”

“Where I live? Why, in my room, down stairs—two windows—front entrance——”

“You miss the significance of my question entirely, Juffrouw Laps. The meaning would be similar if I were to ask you if you belonged to that class of organisms that live in oyster-shells.”

“Yes, yes, Juffrouw Laps,” cried the triumphant hostess, “that’s the point—the main point!”

And Stoffel added that it was really and truly the main point.

Juffrouw Laps saw that she was hopelessly lost, for she had to admit to herself that she didn’t usually reside in an oyster-shell. She looked at the teacher with astonishment; but he paid no attention at all to the effect of his questions. Assuming a sort of legal manner—which was closely imitated by his wig, he continued:

“Can you live in water? Have you gills?”

“In water? But—Master Pennewip——”

Wig to the left, which meant: No, but!

“Or half in water, half on land?”

“Master Pennewip, how should I——”

Wig to the right: No subterfuges.

“Answer me, Juffrouw Laps, have you cold blood? Do you bring living young into the world?”

“It is a sin, Master Pennewip!”

The wig now looked like a battering-ram, anticipating the nature of the next question.

“Can you lay eggs, Juffrouw Laps? I only ask you the question. Can you lay eggs? Eh?”

She said she couldn't.

“Then you are a sucking animal, Juffrouw Laps!”

The wig was in the middle again resting quietly. It had vanquished Juffrouw Laps.

I wonder what the reader's idea is of the effect produced on the company by this terrible sentence, against which there could be no appeal. There was something pitiless in Pennewip's manner, and in his contracted eyebrows there was no intimation of mercy.

## CHAPTER X

**T**HE attentive reader who knows human nature will naturally wish to know why I closed the last chapter so tamely, and why that zoölogical problem which, only a short time before had caused such a violent explosion, was now allowed to rest in peace.

There are three reasons for this.

Firstly, the women had been so wrought up that they were now exhausted.

Secondly, Juffrouw Laps, the shrewd leader of the fight, looked over the battlefield and, without thinking of the famous battle between the Horatii and the Curiatii, saw with innate tactical talent the correctness of "divide and conquer." With the forces Stotter, Mabbel, Krummel and Zipperman against the house of Pieterse—that was all right. But now that the house was supported by Pennewip's powerful hand, it was prudent to withdraw from the battle. For who could guarantee her that she might depend upon her allies? What assurance had she that the midwife, or even Juffrouw Zipperman would not go over to the enemy?—if only out of deference to the versatile wig! No, no, no! She wouldn't risk her rhetorical artillery in such a doubtful engagement! She was content to say to herself, "I will get even with you later." Imagining her, with all her relations to society, multiplied



by twenty or thirty millions, we would have read the next day in this or that official Laps organ something like this:

“Our relations with the Pietersian empire are most cordial. The recent friendly meeting between the two sovereigns was merely that they might have the mutual pleasure of seeing one another, and had no political significance whatever. It will be seen how unfounded were those rumors of ‘strained relations,’ which were said to have been brought about by a discussion of certain characteristics of our popular princess. The reader will recall that we never gave credence to those rumors, and reported them with great reserve.”

Thirdly. The third and chief cause of the armistice was—curiosity. Under the present changed circumstances whoever betrayed any anger would have to leave; and whoever left would not find out why Master Pennewip had come, or what new crime Walter had committed. Again we see the truth of the proposition, that everything has its good side.

“But, Master Pennewip,” asked Juffrouw Pieterse—she threw the subdued sucking animal a look that was like a triumphant telegram, and read: Where are you now?—“but Master Pennewip, what has Walter been doing now?”

“Yes, what has he been up to this time,” added Juffrouw Laps, delighted that the conversation had taken this turn, and that she was now to hear about Walter’s latest sin.

For the sinner is a thing in which pious persons find much edification. As we have already seen, Juffrouw Laps was fond of edification.

Pennewip was just on the point of beginning his indictment when the door-bell rang. It rang again: "It's for us"—and in a moment our truant walked into the room.

He was paler than usual, and with good reason; for strange things had happened to him since Fancy had lifted him up and borne him away.

"Juffrouw Pieterse," began Pennewip, "my school is famous, even as far away as Kattenburg. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, Master Pennewip."

"I repeat it: Famous! And, too, chiefly on account of the fine moral there—I mean, of course, in my school. Religion and morality occupy the first place in my school. I could show you verses on the Deity—but I pass over that. It is sufficient for you to know that my school is famous as far as—but what am I talking about—I've even had a boy from Wittenburg; and I was once consulted about the education of a boy whose father lived at Muiderberg."

"Oh, Master Pennewip!"

"Yes, Juffrouw, I still have the letter and could show it to you. The man was a gravedigger—the boy painted inappropriate figures on the coffins. And just for this reason I feel it my duty to tell you that I don't intend to see my school lose its good name through that good-for-nothing boy of yours there!"

Poor Walter had fallen from the clouds. That sounded quite different from a papal appointment—which he really no longer cared for, as he had just received another appointment that pleased him better.

His mother wanted to pass immediately to what she

called her "divine worship" and give him a sound thrashing, in order to satisfy the teacher that religion and morality took the first place in her house, too.

But the teacher found it preferable to tell the party what the trouble was, and incidentally to strengthen the feeling of guilt in the patient.

"Your son belongs to the class of robbers, murderers, ravishers of women, incendiaries——"

That was all.

"Holy grace! Heavenly righteousness! Compassionate Christian souls! Ah, divine and human virtue, is it possible! What must we endure!"

I cannot always be exact; but, in general, such was the flood of exclamations that all but swept away that ten-year-old robber, murderer, ravisher of women and incendiary.

"I am going to read you something from his hand," said the teacher, "and then if anybody still doubts the boy's viciousness——"

All tacitly promised to have no doubts.

The work that the teacher read was indeed of such a nature as to leave small room for doubts; and I, who have chosen Walter for my hero, anticipate difficulty in convincing the reader that he was not so bad as he seemed—after his

#### "ROBBER SONG."

"On the steed,  
Off I speed,  
With helmet on head  
And a sword in my hand and the enemy dead;  
Quick, away!"

“Christian souls,” cried the whole party, “is he mad?”

“Rather late,  
Near the gate  
A push and a blow,  
Vanquished dragoon, Margrave laid low——”

“Heaven save us, what has he against the Margrave,” wailed the mother.

“For the spoil!”

“Don’t you see, it’s for booty,” said Juffrouw Laps.  
“I told you so: He began with the Bible, he’ll end with——”

“And the prize—  
Pretty eyes——”

“Did you ever hear the like—he has scarcely shed his milk teeth!”

“And the prize—  
Pretty eyes—  
She was bought with steel!——”

“With ste-e-l!”

“And the prize—  
Pretty eyes—  
She was bought with steel;  
I bore her away to the cave just to feel  
How it seemed.”

“Heavenly grace, what is he going to do in the cave?”

“In my arm,  
Free from harm  
Lay the maid as we sped;  
Her cries, sweet complaints, and the tears——”

“ Oh, blessed peace, and the poor thing crying!”

“ Her cries, sweet complaints, and the tears  
she shed—  
O, delight!”

“ And he calls that delight! I'm getting right cold.”

“ Then again,  
O'er the plain——”

“ Holy Father, there he goes again!”

“ Then again,  
O'er the plain.  
Right and left, nothing spurned,  
Here a villa destroyed or a cloister burned  
For fun.”

“ The Devil is in that boy. For fun!”

“ Farther yet,  
I forget—  
But the deeds they were dire,  
And the road was marked with blood and fire  
And revenge!”

“ Mercy on us! What had they done to him!”

“ Revenge's sweet,  
And is meet  
For the King of the World——”

“ Is he crazy? I'll make him a king!”

“ Revenge's sweet  
And is meet  
For the King of the World,  
Who alone is supreme, with a banner unfurled  
Forever!”

“ What sort of a thing is he talking about?”

“ All! Hurrah!  
But, I say——”

Everybody shuddered.

“All! Hurrah!

But, I say

No pardon shall be lavished,

The men shall be hanged and the women——”

“Trudie, Trudie, the camphor bottle! You see—  
I——”

“The men shall be hanged and the women  
ravished——”

“The camphor bottle! Trudie, Trudie!”

“For pleasure!”

“For pleasure,” repeated the teacher in a grave-  
yard voice, “for pleasure!”

“He—does—it—for—pleasure!”

The company was stupefied. Even Stoffel’s pipe  
had gone out.

But Walter’s was not a nature to be easily disturbed.  
After his mother had beaten him till she came to her  
senses again, he went to bed in the little back room, far  
from dissatisfied with the day’s work, and was soon  
dreaming of Fancy.

## CHAPTER XI

ON the next day things had largely resumed their wonted course. That someone may not charge me with carelessness, or indifference towards the persons with whom we spent a pleasant evening, I will remark in passing that Juf-frouw Mabbel was again busy with her baking and "clairvoyange," and that Mrs. Stotter had resumed her activities with the stork. Those unfortunate creatures who were committed to her care she condemned to lie motionless for two or three months—perhaps to give the newly born an idea of their new career, and, at the same time, to punish them for the shameful uproar they had caused by their birth.

As for Master Pennewip, he was busy, as usual, educating future grandparents of the past. His wig had not yet recovered from the excitement of the night before and was longing for Sunday.

Klaasje van der Gracht had been awarded the prize with an impressive, "Keep on that way, my boy"; and he kept on. I still see poems in the papers whose clearness, conciseness and sublimity betray his master hand. I have heard that he died of smallpox—he had not been vaccinated, it will be remembered—but I consider it my duty to protect him from any such slander. A genius does not die; otherwise it wouldn't be worth while to be born a genius. Still, if Klaas

had died like other people, his spirit would have lived in those coming after him. And that is a beautiful immortality.

The family de Wilde, too, has not died out, and will not die. I am certain of it.

Juffrouw Krummel asked her husband if she was really a "sucking animal." Being from the bourse, and having much worldly wisdom, he replied after reflection that of such things he didn't believe more than half he heard. "In this case the last half," he added—but softly.

Juffrouw Zipperman had caught a cold; but was still able to boast about her son-in-law. She was a "respectable woman." Only she couldn't endure for Juffrouw Laps to talk so much about "virtue," and the "respectability" of her father, who was "in the grain business." Old Man Laps, she said, was not *in*, but *under* the grain business. He had carried sacks of grain, but that was quite different from selling grain. For the man who sells is much bigger than the man who carries. Juffrouw, therefore, had been making misleading statements.

Trudie and her sisters had decked themselves out as well as possible and were sitting at the window. When young people passed by they looked as if they had never in their lives straightened out anybody.

The Juffrouw in the rear below told the grocer that she was going to move out; for it was just scandalous, simply scandalous the way the Pieterse carried on in their back room; that she couldn't leave anything uncovered.

Juffrouw Pieterse was busy with her household,



and looked like a working woman. From time to time she had "divine service" with the children, who, if they could have had their choice, would have preferred to have been born among the Alfures, Dajaks, or some other benighted people whose religion is less strenuous.

I am glad to be able to say that Juffrouw Laps had passed a good night. I should like to tell more about her, but I don't care to exhaust myself.

Stoffel had returned to school, and was trying to inspire the boys with contempt for riches. He was using on them a poem that had probably been written in a garret by some poor devil or other whose wealth gave him little cause for complaint. The boys were inattentive, and seemed not to grasp the peculiar pleasure in having no money to buy marbles. Stoffel attributed their hard-heartedness to Walter's crazy ideas: They had heard of his attack on the Margrave and of that remarkable visit to the cave.

And Walter?

He still lived in expectation of the punishment he deserved so richly. For his mother had given him to understand repeatedly that the little "straightening out" of the evening before was merely for practice, and that the reward of his sin would be delayed till she could speak with the preacher about it.

In the meanwhile Walter didn't know what to do. He couldn't return to school: Pennewip had closed for him that fountain of knowledge.

Nor was he allowed to go out for a walk. "Who knows what he will do if I let him out of my sight?" said his mother, who was presumably afraid that he

might make a fresh attack on the cloisters. As a matter of fact, she denied him this privilege merely because Walter asked it.

She expressed the opinion that it was best not to let bad children have their own way.

If Walter had been right wise, he would have pretended to be thoroughly in love with that dark back room; then, for his moral improvement, he would have been chased down the steps, and away to his sawmills.

But Walter was not smart.

He was forbidden to go into the front room because the young ladies did not care to see him.

That back room was more than dark: It was narrow, and dirty, and reeked with all the fumes of "III, 7, c." But Walter was used to all this and much more. He had always been a martyr—bandages, poultices, bandy legs, biblical history, rickets, poems on goodness, evening prayers, the judgment day, hobgoblins for wicked children, closed eyes before and after the slice of bread, sleeping with crooked knees, committing sins, fear for the torn breeches, "divine service" with and without sensible accompaniment!

That droll robber song, whose origin we know so well, shows how easily his childish soul was moved by whatever seemed great to him. He was a pure child, and he was a good boy. He wouldn't have hurt a fly. The criminal character of his song was due to his desire to grasp what is greater than everything else and to be the leader in that world created by his childish fancy.

Robber—good! But a first-class robber, a robber of robbers, a robber without mercy—for pleasure!

As to the gross mistreatment of women mentioned in his song, he had no idea what it meant. He used the word for the sake of rhyme, and because from certain sentences in his book he had got the impression that it must afford great pleasure.

If, perchance, for those fourteen stivers Grandisson—w weary remembrance—had fallen into his hands, his Wednesday's poem would have been quite different. No doubt he would have sought a reconciliation with the butcher's Keesje, forgiving him completely all his liberties with "Holland nobility" and even presenting him a few slate pencils.

For that is the striking characteristic of spirits such as Walter's. Whatever they are, they are that with all their might, always going further in any direction than they would seem to be warranted in doing by the mere external circumstances.

From such characters we could hope much, if through some chance—*i. e.*, a natural cause, which we call chance, because we do not understand it and are ashamed to admit our ignorance—if through some chance they were not born among people who do not understand them, and, therefore, mistreat them.

It is one of our peculiarities that we like to mistreat anyone whose soul is differently organized from ours. How does the watch move? asks the child, and cannot rest until he has torn apart the wheels he could not understand. There the watch lies in pieces, and the little miscreant excuses himself with the remark that he just wanted to see how it was made.

## CHAPTER XII

**W**ALTER sat with his elbows on the table, his chin resting in his hands. He seemed to be deeply interested in Leentje's sewing, but we shall see in a moment that his thoughts were elsewhere, and, too, far away from III. 7, c.

They had forbidden her to speak to the shameless rascal, and only occasionally, when Juffrouw Pieterse left the room, did she have an opportunity to whisper to him a few words of comfort. To be sure, she noticed that Walter was not so sad as we should expect one to be who was caught in between the thrashing of yesterday and the priest of to-morrow. This gentleman was to come to-morrow to settle the matter.

"But, Walter, how could you speak of burning cloisters!"

"Ah, I meant—sh!"

"And the Count—what had he done?"

"It was a Margrave—sh!"

"What sort of a count is that? I'll bet he was one out of another house."

"Yes, it was Amalia's father—but that isn't it. I have something to tell you, Leentje—sh!"

"Amalia—who is Amalia?"

"That was my bride, but—Leentje, I wanted to tell you something—sh!"

"Your bride! Are you mad, Walter? Your bride?"

"Yes, she was; but now no more. I was going to help her—but a duck came—but that isn't it, Leentje. Now I see it all—sh. I swam by—sh!"

"Who, what? Swam by?"

"By Amalia. She sat on the rushes—now I understand it all—I am—sh!"

"I don't understand a word, Walter. But the women—why did you want to——"

Poor innocent Leentje.

"The women were in the book—but listen, I am—sh!"

"And the cloisters?"

"That has nothing to do with it—I know everything now. Listen Leentje, I am—sh!"

"For Heaven sake, Walter, what's the matter with you? You look as if you were mad."

Walter had a vision. He stretched himself up, cast a proud glance at the beams in the ceiling, placed his right hand over his heart, extended his left, as if he were draping a Spanish mantle about him—remember that he had never been in a theatre—and said:

"Leentje, I am a prince."

At that moment his mother came in, boxed his ears and sent him out of the room.

Walter's principality was in the moon—no, much farther away.

In the following the reader shall learn how he had attained to this new dignity.

Long before the beginning of this story—yes, a long

time before this—there was a queen of spirits, just like in “Hans Heiling.” Her name was A—o.

She did not live in a cave, but held her court far up in the clouds; and this was airier and more suitable for a queen.

She wore a necklace of stars, and a sun was set in her signet-ring.

Whenever she went forth, the clouds flew about like dust, and with a motion of her hand she drove away the firmaments.

Her children played with planets as with marbles, and she complained that it was so difficult for her to find them again when they had rolled away under the furniture.

The little son of the queen, Price Upsilon, was peevish over this and was continually calling for more playthings.

The queen then gave him a sack of siriuses; but in a short time these, too, were all lost. It was Upsilon's own fault: He ought to have paid more attention to his playthings.

They tried to satisfy him as best they could, but no matter what they gave him, he always wanted something else, something larger. This was a defect in the character of the little prince.

The mother, who, as queen of the spirits, was a very intelligent woman, thought it would be a good idea for the little prince to accustom himself to privations.

She issued an order, therefore, that for a certain time Upsilon was to have no playthings.

The order was carried out. Everything was taken

away from him, even the comet that he and his little sister Omicron happened to be playing with.

Prince Upsilon was somewhat stubborn. He so far forgot himself one day as to speak disrespectfully to his mother.

Even Princess Omicron was contaminated by his example—nothing is worse than a bad example—and violently threw her pallet against the universe. That was not becoming in a girl.

Now, in the kingdom of spirits, there was a law to the effect, that anyone showing disrespect toward the queen, or throwing anything against the universe, should be deprived of all titles and dignities for a certain length of time.

Prince Upsilon became a grain of sand.

After he had behaved himself well in this capacity for a few centuries he received the news that he had been promoted to be a moss plant.

Then one morning he woke up and found himself a coral zoöphyte.

That occurred about the time that man began to cook his food.

He was industrious, building up islands and continents on the earth. In recognition of his zeal he was turned into a crab.

In this capacity, too, there could be no complaint against him, and he was soon transferred to the class of sea-serpents.

He played some innocent pranks on sailors, but he never harmed anyone. Soon he received four feet and the rank of a mastodon, with the privilege of roaming over the land.

With the self-control of a philosopher he entered upon his new life, busying himself with geological investigations.

A few centuries later—remember that in the kingdom of spirits all time taken together is only as a short quarter of an hour—or to speak more correctly, that all time is nothing. For time was made merely for man, for his amusement, and given to him just as we give picture books to children. For spirits, present, past and future are all the same. They comprehend yesterday, to-day and to-morrow at a glance, just as one reads a word without spelling it out. What was and is going to be, *is*.

The Egyptians and Phœnicians knew that very well, but Christians have forgotten it.

Fancy knew that Walter could not read, so she related Upsilon's story to him, just as I am doing for the reader.

Some centuries later he had become an elephant; then a moment later, *i. e.*, about ten years before the opening of my story—I mean years as we mortals reckon them—he was elevated to the class of man.

I don't know what sins he may have committed as an elephant.

Anyway, Fancy had said, that in order to return to his station as a spirit-prince in a short time and escape any further degradation it was necessary for him to be diligent and well behaved in his present state, and not write any robber songs, or slip out things and sell them—even if it was only a Bible.

And, too, he must become reconciled to seeing Juf-



frouw Pieterse without a train on her dress. Fancy said it couldn't be helped.

This "Fancy" must have been some lady at his mother's court, who visited him in his exile to comfort and encourage him, so that he wouldn't think they were punishing him because they were angry with him.

She promised to visit him from time to time. "But," asked Walter, "how is my little sister getting along?"

"She's being punished, too. You know the law. She is patient with it all and promises to improve. At first she was a fire-ball; but she behaved so nicely that she was soon changed to a moon-beam; and also in this state there was nothing against her. It seemed to be a pleasure for her; and it was all her mother could do to keep from shortening the punishment. She was soon turned into vapor, and stood the test well; for she filled the universe. That was about the time you began to eat grass. Soon she was a butterfly. But your mother did not consider this suitable for a girl and had her changed into a constellation. There she stands before us now."

It often happens that we do not see a thing because it is too big.

"Look," said Fancy. "There—to the right! No, further—there, there—the north star! That is her left eye. You can't see her right, because she is bending over towards Orion, the doll which she holds in her lap and caresses."

Walter saw it plainly enough and cried: "Omicron, Omicron!"

“No, no, prince,” said the lady of the court, “that will not do. Each must undergo his punishment alone. It’s already a great concession that you two are imprisoned in the same universe. Recently, when your little brothers flooded the milky way with sin, they were separated completely.”

Walter was sad. How gladly would he have kissed his little sister!—that group of stars nursing the doll.

“Ah, Fancy, let me be with Omicron.”

Fancy said neither yes nor no.

She looked as if she were reflecting on the possibility of accomplishing the almost impossible.

Walter, taking courage from her hesitation, repeated his request.

“Ah, let me live with my little sister again, even if I have to eat grass or build continents—I will eat and build with pleasure, if I may only be with Omicron.”

Probably Fancy was afraid to promise something beyond her power; and she was sorry not to be able to give her promise.

“I will ask,” she whispered, “and now——”

Walter rubbed his eyes. There was the bridge and the ditch. He heard the ducks cackling from the distance. He saw his mills again. Yes, yes, there they were. But their name was no longer—what was their name?

The mills were called “Morning Hour” and “Eagle,” and they called out just like other saw-mills: “Karre, karre, kra, kra——”

Thereupon Walter went home. We have already seen what awaited him there.

## CHAPTER XIII

**T**HE preacher had come and gone. Sentence had been passed and the penalty paid. But Walter was depressed and despondent.

Leentje did her best to put some animation into him, but in vain. Perhaps it was because she no longer understood her ward.

Those confidential communications of Walter's were beyond her comprehension; and often she looked at him as if she doubted his sanity. From her meagre weekly allowance she saved a few doits, thinking to gladden Walter's heart with some ginger cakes, which he had always enjoyed. It was no use: Walter's soul had outgrown ginger cakes. This discovery caused Leentje bitter pain.

"But, my dear child, be reasonable, and don't worry over such foolishness. This Fancy, or whatever the creature's name is, has mocked you; or you have dreamed it all."

"No, no, no, Leentje. It's all true. I know everything she said, and it's all true."

"But, Walter, that story about your sister—you would have known that long ago."

"I did know it, but I had forgotten it. I knew everything that Fancy told me. It had only slipped out of my mind. When she spoke, then it all came back to me distinctly."

“ I will go to those mills some day,” said Leentje.

And she did it. After Walter’s description she was able to find the place where that important meeting had taken place. She saw the timbers, the dirt, the ducks, the meadow—everything was there, even the ashes,—everything except Fancy and her stories.

Nor could Walter find Fancy now. In vain did he go out walking with those respectable Halleman boys as often as he was in the way at home. For hours he would stand on the bridge and listen to the rattling of the sawmills ; but they told him nothing, and Fancy would not return.

“ She has too much to do at my mother’s court,” Walter sighed, and went home sad and disappointed.

When he looked out the window and saw the beautiful stars twinkling encouragement to him, he cheered up a little. His sadness was less bitter, but it was still there. Pain passed into home-sickness, a sweet longing for home, and with tears in his eyes, but no longer despairing, he whispered “ Omicron, Omicron ! ”

Who heard that call, or understood his grief over his exile? Who observed how that sigh for the “ higher ” and that fiery desire had passed into a nobler state?

After long deliberations and Walter’s express promise to do better, Master Pennewip had at last been prevailed upon to allow our young robber to return to school. He now had the opportunity to perfect himself in verse-writing, penmanship, verbs, “ Holland Counts ” and other equally important things.

The teacher said that the boy at Muiderberg had

been still worse, and he had known what to prescribe. Walter would do all right now, he thought; but Juf-frouw Pieterse must get another pastor, for the present one belonged to the class of "drinkers." This she did. Walter was to receive religious instruction from a real preacher.

I don't remember the title of the book, but the first lines were:

"*Q.* From whom did you and everything in existence have its origin?"

Walter wanted to say, From my mother; but the book said:

"*Ans.* From God, who made everything out of nothing."

"*Q.* How do you know that?"

"*Ans.* From nature and revelation."

Walter didn't know what it meant, but like the good-natured, obedient child that he was, he repeated faithfully what he had memorized from the book. It was annoying for him to have his Sundays spoiled by recitations in the Kings of Israel—days so well suited for rambling. He was jealous of the Jews, who were always led away—a misfortune that seemed delightful to him. But he worked away patiently, and was not the worst of those apprentices in religion. At the end of the year he received a book containing three hundred and sixty-five scriptural texts, twenty-one prayers, as many graces, the Lord's Prayer, the ten commandments and the articles of faith. It also contained directions for using it—once a day through the

year, three times a day for a week, etc., etc.; or simply use as needed. On a leaf pasted in the front of the book was written:

*To Walter Pieterse*  
as a  
*Reward*  
for  
*Excellent recitations*  
in the  
*Noorderkerk*  
and as an  
*Encouragement*  
for him to continue to  
*Honor God*  
in the manner in which he has begun.

Under this were the names of the preacher and the officers of the church, ornamented with flourishes that would have put Pennewip to shame.

The outward respectability of the Hallemans continued to increase. The parents of these children had hired a garden on the "Overtoom." That was so "far out," they said; and then they "couldn't stay in the city forever." Besides, the expense was "not so much"; for there was one gardener for everybody; and then, there were plenty of berries growing there, and that was always very nice. There would be grass enough for bleaching the linen—an important item, for just lately, said the mother of the Hallemans, there had been iron-rust in Betty's dress. For that reason it was the very thing to rent the garden; and if people said anything about it, it would only be because they were jealous. And, too, there was a barrel there for rain-

water; and Mrs. Karels had said it leaked, but it was not true; for everyone must know what he's doing; but when you do anything, everybody is talking about it. If one paid any attention to it, one would never get anything done—and it would be such a recreation for the children. Juffrouw Karels ought to attend to her own business—and when Gustave's birthday came, he might invite some "young gentlemen."

Gustave's birthday came. "Young gentlemen" were to be invited, and—Walter was among that select number.

It would lead me too far from the subject to enter upon an investigation of the motives that prompted Gustave and Franz to invite their former partner in the peppermint business. The list was made out and approved by their mother; and as Juffrouw Pieterse felt flattered, there was no objection from her side. Walter must promise, of course, to behave properly and be "respectable," not to soil his clothes, not to wrestle and tear his clothes, and many other things of a similar nature. Juffrouw Pieterse added that it was a great favor on her part to let him go, for such visits made a lot of work for her.

Yes, Walter was to make a visit! Eat, drink and enjoy himself under a strange roof. It was a great event in his life, and already he was becoming less jealous of the Jews, who went away so often, and finally never came back home at all.

It was midday now—that glorious midday. With indiscribable dignity, for a boy, Walter stepped through the gate-way. "A little to right—to the left, to the left again, then over a bridge, and then to the right

straight ahead. You can't miss it," Gustave had said. The name of the garden was "City Rest," so all Walter had to do was to "ask," and he would "find it."

And so it was.

Anyone making a call or visit for the first time always arrives too early. So it was with Walter, who reached City Rest before any of the other guests. But the boys received him cordially and presented him to their mother, who said that Walter had a pretty face, if it were only not so pale.

The other playmates came then, and running and throwing began, in the customary boyish style. This was interrupted with waffles and lemonade, which they "must drink quite slowly," because they were "wet with perspiration."

When the proud mother of the Hallems was speaking of berries and the grossly slandered rain-water barrel, she might have mentioned the advantages of the leafy bower, where Betty was now sitting with a gentleman.

"Who is that?" asked Walter of little Emma, who was playing with the boys.

"That? That's Betty's sweetheart."

From that touching story of slender Cecilia we know that Walter already had his first love affair behind him; but still Emma's statement was to him something new. Up to that time he had thought that a sweetheart was a girl to whom one gives slatepencils and bonbons. But she seemed to be above such things. Walter saw immediately that he had not taken the right course with Cecilia; and all at once a desire



came over him to know how a grown man treats a girl who is through school.

“ Her sweetheart? ”

“ Oh yes—engagé! ”

That word was too modern for Walter. If the reader is sharp he can calculate in what year that girl married the barber's apprentice. All that is necessary is to determine when that stupid engagé came into use in this sense in “ III. 7, a.”

“ What did you say? ” asked Walter.

“ Engagé—they go together.”

“ What is that? ”

“ Oh, they're going to get married. Don't you know? ”

Walter was ashamed not to know such a simple thing; and, as is often the case, he was ashamed of being ashamed.

“ Certainly, of course I know. I hadn't understood right well. Emma—will you marry me? ”

For the moment Emma was unable to accommodate him, as she was engagé with her mother; but as soon as she was free she would consider the matter, and Walter would probably be favored. She looked at him sweetly—and then the game called her to another part of the yard.

Love is the instinct for unity—and the instinct for multiplicity. As everywhere, nature is simple here in principle, but manifold in application. The love of a ~~thief~~ means: Come, we will go steal together. The servant of the Word unites with his loved one in prayer and psalm, etc., every animal after his kind.

Or is this instinct to share, to be together, to be united at the same the instinct for the good?

In Walter's case it was, even though he himself did not know it. Had he not, in the name of Cecilia, liberated a bird that fluttered about its narrow cage in distress? Of course Cecilia had laughed and asked Walter if he was crazy. She did not know that there was any connection between his sympathy for the poor little bird and the beating of his heart when he scratched her name on the frozen window-pane in the back room. Perhaps she would have understood if she had loved Walter; but that was impossible, because he still wore his jacket stuffed in his trousers.

At all events, it was not possible for him to think of anything bad when he called "Omicron." He had now forgotten Cecilia, and would have been greatly surprised if she had appeared in answer to his call. Little Emma would have come nearer meeting his requirements.

Walter felt that he must know just how the young man was proceeding with Betty in the bower. He soon found an excuse to separate himself from his companions; and then he heard all sorts of things that did not make him much wiser.

"Yes, I said so too. In May——"

"Certainly, on account of the top story——"

"It's annoying! And what does your mother say?"

"Hm—she says we must wait another year, that it isn't respectable to get married in such a hurry—it's just as if——"

"Four years——"

“ Yes, four years. Louw and Anna have been engaged for seven.”

Walter was proud that he knew exactly what it all meant. To rent an upper story together, preferably in May!—that was the way he understood it.

“ And do you get that press for the linen? ”

“ No, mother wants to keep it. But if we will only wait a year she will give us another one—a small one.”

“ The big one would have been nicer.”

“ I think so too, but she says young people don't need a big press. But when my sister was married she got a big one.”

“ Tell them you want a big one too.”

“ It's no use.”

“ Try it. I won't marry without that big one.”

“ I will make them——”

This is a fair sample of what Walter overheard. He was dissatisfied and slipped away and hid himself, lost in thought. He didn't even know himself what was the matter with him; but when Emma came and called him he looked as if he had been thinking of anything else but presses and vacant flats, for in a tone at once joyous and fearful he cried:

“ Could it be she—my little sister? ”

It was evening now, and the children were to continue their games indoors. As the little party was tired, one of the grown-ups was going to tell a story.

Just what “ grown-up ” had been requisitioned to narrate the story of Paradise and Peri, I don't know. Anyway the story hardly harmonized with Betty's *engagement* and that love-obstructing clothes-press.

But just as Fortune is said to smile on everyone once in a lifetime, so, in the midst of the flatness and insipidity of everyday life, it seems that something always happens which gives that one who lays hold of it opportunity to lift himself above the ordinary and commonplace. To the drowning man a voice calls: "Stretch out thy arms, thou canst swim."

"After Peri had begged long, but in vain, at the gates of paradise to be admitted to the land of the blessed, she brought at last, as the most beautiful thing in the world, the sigh of a repentant sinner; and she found favor with the keeper of the gate on account of the sacredness of the gift she had brought——"

"Let's play forfeits now!" cried Gustave.

"Forfeits! Forfeits!" everybody called out after him.

And they played forfeits. Pawns were redeemed; and of course there was some kissing done. Riddles were given that nobody could guess; and who ever knew must not tell—a usual condition in this game.

"Heavy, heavy hangs over your head; what shall the owner do to possess it?"

"Stand on one leg for five minutes."

"Let him jump over a straw—or recite a poem!"

"No, a fable—la cigale, or something like that."

"Yes, yes!"

It was Walter's pawn.

"I don't know any fable," he said, embarrassed; "and I don't know French either."

"I will help you," cried Emma. "Le pere, du pere——"

“That’s no fable! Go ahead, Walter!”

For some of the party it was a joy that Walter knew no Fable and no French. If it were only known how often one can do a kindness by being stupid, perhaps many, out of love for humanity, would affect stupidity.

But Walter did not think of the pleasure of the others—which he could not have understood. He wept, and was angry at Master Pennewip, who had taught him no French and no fable.

“Forward, Walter, forward!” insisted the holder of the pawn.

“It needn’t be French. Just tell a fable.”

“But I don’t know what a fable is.”

“Oh, it’s a story with animals.”

“Yes, or with trees! *Le chêne un jour dit au roseau*—don’t you see, you can have one without animals.”

“Yes, yes, a fable is just a story—nothing else. You can have in it anything you want to.”

“But it must rhyme!”

Walter was thinking about reciting his robber song, but fortunately he reconsidered the matter. That would have been scandalous in the home of the Halle-mans, who were so particularly respectable.

“No,” cried another, who was again wiser than all the rest, “it needn’t rhyme. The cow gives milk—Jack saw the plums hanging—Prince William the First was a great thinker. Don’t you see, Walter, it’s as easy as rolling off of a log. Go ahead and tell something, or else you won’t get your pawn.”

Walter began.

“A little boy died once who was not allowed to go to heaven——”

“Oho! That’s the story of Peri. Tell something else.”

“I was going to change it,” said Walter, embarrassed. “And so the little boy couldn’t enter the heavenly gates, because he didn’t know French, and because he had sometimes been bad, and because he hadn’t learned his lessons, and also because he—because he”—— I believe Walter had something on the end of his tongue about his mother’s box of savings, but he swallowed it, that he might not offend the Hallemins by any allusion to the peppermint business —“because he once laughed during prayers. For it is certain, boys, that if you laugh during prayers you’ll never get to heaven.”

“So—o-oo?” asked several, conscious of their guilt.

“Yes, they can’t go to heaven. Now the boy had had a sister, who died one year before him. He had loved her a lot, and when he died he began to hunt for his sister right away. ‘Who is your sister?’ he was asked.”

“Who asked him that?”

“Be still! Don’t interrupt him. Let Walter tell his story!”

“I don’t know who asked that. The boy said that his little sister had on a blue dress and had dimples in her cheeks, and——”

“Just like Emma!”

“Yes, exactly like Emma. They told him that there was a little girl in heaven that looked just like that.

She had come the year before, and had asked them to let her brother in, who would certainly inquire after her. But the boy could not go in. I have already said why."

"Had the little girl always learned her lessons?"

"Of course! Don't you see she had? Let Walter go on with his story!"

"It was sad that he could not get to see his sister any more. He felt that it hadn't really been worth the trouble to die. 'Oh, just let me in!' he begged the gentleman at the door——"

"At the gate!" corrected several simultaneously, who, though untouched by the sublimity of Walter's conception of death, were offended by the commonplaceness of the word door. But such things happen frequently.

"All right!" said Walter. He was ashamed that he had offended against propriety. "The gentleman at the gate said, 'No!' and then the poor boy returned to the earth."

"That won't do," cried the philosophical contingency, "whoever is dead remains dead."

"Don't interrupt him. Of course it's only a story!"

Walter continued: "He returned to the earth and learned French. Then he appeared at the gate again and said, 'Oui, Monsieur!' but it did no good; he was not admitted."

"I should think not; he ought to have said: 'j'aime, tu aimes.'"

"I don't know anything about that," Walter replied.

"Then he went to the earth again and learned his lessons till he could say them backwards. He did

this for the keeper of the gate; but all this did no good; he was not allowed to go in."

"Of course not," cried one of the wise ones, "to get to heaven you must be confirmed. Had he been confirmed?"

"No. That's the reason it was so difficult. Then he tried something else. He said that he was engaged to his sister."

"Just like Betty," cried Emma.

"Yes, like Betty—and that he loved her and wanted to marry her. But it was all of no use; they wouldn't let him into heaven.

"Finally he didn't dare go to the gate any more, for fear the keeper would get angry at him."

"And then? What happened?"

"I don't know," Walter stuttered. "I don't know what he ought to do to get to heaven."

Walter knew the rest of the story very well, but he couldn't put it into words. This was shown in a peculiar manner an hour later.

On the way home the party was almost run over by a wagon just as they were crossing a bridge. In the commotion Emma slipped under the railing and fell into the stream. Somebody screamed, and Walter sprang after her.

If he had died at that moment the keeper of the gate would hardly have turned him away because he didn't know French and had not been confirmed.

When he was brought home, wet and dirty, Juffrouw Pieterse said that one ought not to tempt the Master, and that's what one did when one jumped into the water without being able to swim.



But I find that the man who can't swim is the very one to expect something of the Master; for the man who can swim has some prospect of helping himself.

And Juffrouw Pieterse complained that there was "always something the matter with that boy." There was something the matter with him.

## CHAPTER XIV

**J**UFFROUW PIETERSE must have inherited something, for all at once the Pieterses moved to a more respectable neighborhood, and the daughters no longer knew any of the girls that they used to sew with. Such things do happen in cases of inheritance, when one moves to a more select quarter. Besides, there were other signs. They exerted themselves in trying to get Leentje to speak "better Dutch." Stoffel was zealous in teaching her, but Juffrouw Pieterse spoiled everything by her bad example.

Walter was now wearing a new jacket, with a small collar, such as cabmen wore later. For him a jacket to stuff in the trousers was a thing of the past. It "looked so babyish," the young ladies said, and was "out of the question now when the boy can write poetry."

That Walter could write poetry was boasted of to everybody that would listen. Under the circumstances they really had no right to reap any fame from Walter's robber song; but this only showed what an important rôle vanity plays in the world. Of course he himself never heard anything of this; it was mentioned only when he was not present.

The image of Cecilia had disappeared from Walter's

heart; and little Emma was forgotten. Omicron must show her face in the stars from time to time to remind the child of his love. And even when he looked at the evening sky and his soul was stirred by an inexpressible longing after the good, it was not so much that he was thinking of Omicron as that he was moved by vague sweet memories. In the twelve years of his life there was a mythical prehistoric period which was difficult to separate from the historical period.

He didn't know that he could write verses. He accepted it as a matter of course that his robber song was very poor, and looked upon Klaasje van der Gracht with awe. It was from Juffrouw Laps he learned that he could write poetry; and it was an illumination for him.

Juffrouw Laps had an uncle whose birthday was coming the next week. She had paid the Pieterses a swell visit to ask if Walter wouldn't write her a poem for the occasion. She would see that he got some bonbons.

"But Juffrouw Pieterse, you must tell him that it must be religious and that my uncle is a widower. He must bring that in. I should like for it to be in the melody of the 103d psalm, for my uncle has that psalm in his lyre."

The reader will note that she did not mean the lyre of Apollo. What she spoke of was a thing that turned, and made a screechy noise.

Juffrouw Pieterse was going to speak with Walter about it when he came from school, but first she had to consider the matter with Stoffel, to decide whether it should be a request or a command, so that Walter

would have no reason to be "stuck-up." For that she could not endure in a child.

"Walter, did you know your lesson?"

"No, mother; I had to learn thirteen mountains in Asia, and I knew only nine."

"Now, look here, that won't do. I'm paying tuition for nothing. Do you think money grows on my back? I don't know what's to become of you."

"I don't know, either."

After all, though, Walter was flattered by the commission to write a poem. Stoffel's and Juffrouw Pieterse's efforts to conceal their real opinion of his poetical talents had been useless. It was a pleasant surprise for the boy to learn that he was looked up to. He had always heard that he was worse than worthless, and that he would never amount to anything. It interested him now to hear the assurance of his mother and Stoffel that the commission was only a punishment for not knowing the mountains in Asia. In a great rush Stoffel taught him the difference between "masculine" and "feminine" verses, explaining that these must alternate, that all must be of the same length, and that if at any time the boy was in doubt he would clear the matter up, etc., etc.

Walter was delighted. He went to the back room, got a slate pencil and began to write. It could hardly be called a success. "A widower of God"—"O God, a widower!" That was as far as he got.

He gnawed on the pencil till he had pulverized it and worn out his teeth, but it wouldn't go. He was continually being interrupted by Stoffel's masculine and feminine verses. He had been too proud, and

now he was receiving his punishment. He began to believe that his mother was right when she said nothing would ever come of him.

Nor could Leentje help him. So he determined to make another attempt to-morrow. Perhaps he could do better then. Leentje agreed with him.

"All right," said Juffrouw Pieterse. "But don't disgrace us all. Remember, I told Juffrouw Laps you could do it; and the man's birthday comes Thursday week. So you haven't any too much time."

Walter went to Ash Gate, found his bridge and began to weep bitterly.

"See what's the matter with that boy," he heard a woman saying to a girl fourteen or fifteen years old. "Perhaps he has lost something."

"Have you lost anything?"

Walter looked up, and was surprised; for he seemed to have seen that face before. It reminded him of Fancy.

"Now, everything will be all right. There you are; and I have been hunting for you."

"For me?"

"Yes, yes, but I just didn't know it. But I know it now. Tell me right quick how to write the poem!"

The girl, who was helping her mother place the linen on the grass for bleaching, looked at Walter in astonishment. She hurried back to her mother to say that she didn't know what was the matter with the boy, but that there was certainly something wrong. "He looks as if he were scared half to death," she decided.

Then she ran and fetched water from the house near

by and made Walter drink. He saw that he had made a mistake; but there was something in the manner of the girl that drew him to her irresistibly, even though her name was only Femke. So the mother addressed her. And this name reminded him of Fancy, which was something.

Femke pointed to an inverted basket and told him to tell the cause of his trouble; and Walter did it as well as he could, while the mother was busy with the linen.

"Maybe I can help you," the mother said. "I have a nephew who is a widower."

"Yes, Juffrouw—but the poem? And there must be something about God in it."

"Certainly. It's a long story. His wife was a niece of my husband's—you see we are Catholics, and she acted according to her religion—put a stone on those cloths, Femke, or they'll blow away—yes, bleaching is a job. You have no idea what a bother it is—yes, she acted according to her religion; and that was right. People that don't do that are not much. But he—draw that shirt back a little, Femke. The sleeve is hanging in the ditch—but he didn't believe in it, and said it was all nonsense. But when she died, and he saw all that was done for her—it was Father Jansen who was there. Of course you know him—he always walks with a black cane, but he never lets it touch the ground——"

The women looked at Walter questioningly. The poor boy sat on the basket, his elbows on his knees, his chin in his hands. He had listened with open mouth, wondering how he was going to apply it all to his poem. Of Father Jansen and that cane which

despised the ground he had never heard. This he had to confess.

“Yes, it was Father Jansen who was there, and when my husband’s nephew saw all that—don’t spill any, Femke, or the mud will splatter so bad—yes, when he saw that a human being doesn’t die like an animal, then he was more respectful, and after that he observed Easter like other people. And last year when he broke his leg—he’s a dyer, you know—he drew thirteen stivers for nine weeks. And so I wanted to tell you that there’s a widower in our family. And now you must get up, for I need the basket.”

Walter arose quickly, as if he feared he might seem to be trespassing; and the woman went away, after having warned Femke to watch the linen and call her if any bad boys should come along.

“Are you better now?” Femke asked kindly.

“Oh yes; but I don’t see how I’m to use all that in my poem. You must remember that it has to rhyme, and the verses must be of the same length, and that they must be masculine and feminine; for my brother said so, and he’s a school-teacher.”

Femke reflected, then all at once she cried, “Do you know Latin?” As if Latin would help Walter.

“No,” disconsolately.

“Well, it really makes no difference. It’s in Dutch, too. Just watch the linen a minute.”

Walter promised, and Femke ran to the house.

Then some boys came along throwing rocks. Walter, conscious of his responsibility, called to them to desist—or words to that effect. This only made them worse. They came closer, and, to worry Walter, be-

gan to walk over the linen. For him it was as if they were mistreating Femke, and he charged on the miscreants. But it was two against one, and a weaker one at that; so he would have soon been defeated if his lady had not returned quickly. She rescued him and drove off his assailants; and when she saw that his lip was bleeding she gave him a kiss. The boy's heart trembled; all at once his soul was lifted to an unfamiliar level; and for the first time in weeks he felt again that princely nature that had given Leentje such a fright. His eyes shone, and the boy, who but a moment ago did not know how he was to write some rhymes, was filled with the feelings and emotions that make poets of men.

"O Fancy, Fancy, to die for thee—to die with such a kiss on the lips!"

It hurt him to think that the boys were gone. If there had been ten of them he would have had courage for the unequal fight.

And Femke, who had never heard of poetical overflows, understood him immediately, for she was a pure, innocent girl. She felt Walter's chivalry, and knew that she was the lady to reward it.

"You are a dear sweet boy," she said, taking his head between her hands and kissing him again, and again—as if she had done something of this kind before. But such was not the case.

"And now you must read the verses in the little book. Maybe it will help you to write for your aunt——"

"She isn't my aunt," Walter said, "but of course I will look through the book."



He laid it on the railing of the bridge and began to read. Femke, who was taller than he, had put one arm around his neck, while with the other hand she was pointing out what he should read.

"Don't you see?" she said, "the lines are the same length."

"Yes, but they don't rhyme." And Walter read:

Mother most pure,  
 Mother undefiled,  
 Virgin most powerful,  
 Virgin most merciful,  
 Virgin most faithful,  
 Spiritual vessel,  
 Vessel of honor,  
 Vessel of singular devotion,  
 Mystical rose,  
 Tower of David,  
 Tower of Ivory,  
 Gate of Heaven—

"But, Femke, how am I to use that for my poem? I don't understand any of it."

Femke didn't understand much of it either. She had been reading the book every day for the past four or five years, and she had always been satisfied with her comprehension of it. But now she saw that she was as ignorant about it as Walter. She was ashamed and closed the book.

"But don't you know what Faith is?" she asked, as if this defect might account for the general ignorance of both.

"Not that way," Walter replied. "I learned it another way."

“ But you believe in Jesus, don't you? ”

“ Oh, yes. That's God's son. But I didn't learn anything about vessels and towers. Do they belong to faith? ”

“ Why, certainly! But you know the holy virgin, Maria! ”

“ So? Maria? No, I don't. ”

“ And Purgatory? ”

“ I don't know anything about it. ”

“ And confession? ”

“ No. ”

“ What do you do then? ”

“ How do you mean, Femke? ”

“ I mean to be saved. ”

“ I don't know, ” Walter replied. “ You mean, to get to heaven? ”

“ Why, certainly. That's the point. And you can't do that without the holy virgin and such a book. Shall I teach you the creed, Walter? Then we'll be together in heaven. ”

That pleased Walter, and Femke and Walter began:

“ God created the world—— ”

“ What did he do before that, Femke? ”

“ I don't know. But the people were made wicked by a snake; then the Pope pronounced a curse upon the snake, for the Pope lives in Rome, you know. And then Jesus was crucified to make the people good again. That was a long time ago. ”

“ Yes, I know, ” Walter said, “ Jesus changed the number of the year. At his birth he began at nought. ”

Femke didn't know again. In this way each supplemented the knowledge of the other; and Walter was

proud that he knew something about the creed, even if Femke did think it the wrong creed.

“And so Jesus made the people good again, and if you will pray out of such a book you will be saved. Do you understand, Walter?”

“Not quite. What is an ivory tower?”

“Why, that’s only a name for the virgin. It’s as if you were to call the pastor father. Now you understand.”

Femke hunted for another illustration.

“You have a mother; what do you call her?”

“Why, I call her mother.”

“Correct. What do the other people call her?”

“They call her Juffrouw Pieterse.”

“Just so. When we call the holy virgin ‘ivory tower’ it’s just like calling your mother Juffrouw Pieterse. Ivory gate means that to get to heaven we must go through the holy virgin. That’s the main thing.”

“But, Femke, what is a virgin?”

Femke blushed.

“That is anybody that has never had a child.”

“Me?” asked Walter in astonishment.

“No, child, it must be a girl!”

“Are you a virgin?”

“Of course!”

Femke spoke the unvarnished truth.

“Of course—because I’m not married.”

“But Maria was married—and Jesus was her child.”

“Ah, that’s where the holiness comes in,” replied Femke. “And for that reason she is called the ivory gate. Do you understand now, Walter?”

Walter did not understand; but he asked permission to take the book home with him, that he might study it. That, however, was not possible, as Femke needed the book every day. Walter consoled himself easily, for not for anything in the world would he have endangered Femke's salvation. Femke asked him to come again. She would be glad to tell him all she knew about the matter; and, if both should get tangled up, she would ask Father Jansen about it. And then Walter would soon be as wise as she was.

Walter withdrew; *i. e.*, after he had kissed Femke heartily. This meeting with her, the mysterious book, salvation, the fight with the boys—all these things would run through his mind whenever he tried to think of the poem. It seemed to him that there was some connection between them.

When he got home he turned through Stoffel's books, hoping to find something about holy vessels, ivory towers, and immaculate virgins. But they were all school books, and gave information about everything else but salvation. Walter was crushed, but he was still searching.

“Master Pennewip had a father and mother; and certainly old Pennewip, too, who slaughtered hogs; and the one before him, too—but who was the first Pennewip? And who slaughtered the hogs before old Pennewip? And before there were any hogs, what did butchers do? And——”

I will know all of that some day, Walter thought. If he could have only quieted himself so well about his poem! If that were only written, he thought, then he would clear up the lost causes of everything. In the

meanwhile he dreamed of Femke, of her blue eyes, her friendliness, her soft lips—and of her voice, when she said, “ You are a dear, sweet boy.”

Could it be that she is Omicron? he thought.

And thus the child dreamed, dreamed; and, just as in the development of humanity, in his life was working a three-fold impulse, towards love, knowledge, and conflict.

“ But Walter, don’t you read any books at home about the creed? ”

Thus Femke questioned her little friend the next day, as he sat on her basket again.

“ Yes, but they’re not pretty.”

“ Don’t you know anything by heart? ”

Walter repeated a stanza of a reformed church hymn. This found no favor with Femke; though she liked his reciting.

“ Don’t you read anything else? ”

Walter reflected: he flew through Stoffel’s library—works of the Poetical Society, Geology by Ippel, On Orthography, Regulations for the Fire-Watch, Story of Joseph by Hülshoff, Brave Henry, Jacob Among His Children, Sermons by Hellendoorm, A Catechism by the same, Hoorn’s Song-book.

He felt that all of this would not prove very imposing for Femke. Finally:

“ I do know something, but it isn’t about faith and the creed. It’s about Glorioso.”

Femke promised to listen, and he began to relate the story. At first he spoke mechanically, using all the “ and then’s ”: but soon he put himself into the soul of the hero and told the story better than he had read it in

the greasy book. At every deed of Glorioso he would spring from the basket and act the part of that hero in a way that made Femke's blood run cold. Still, how magnificent she found it! And when at last he was through, a spark from his peculiar but sincere enthusiasm had fallen into her heart, which like his beat with delight over the beauty of what she had heard. Her cheeks glowed—really, if a Treckschent had started to Italy at that moment I believe she would have gone along, in order to take part in so much danger and adventure—and *love*. The nicest thing about the story was that it showed how firm such a robber is in the faith.

“Don't you know another story?”

“Yes,” said Walter. “One more. It's in a little book—a calendar, I believe.”

And he related the story of Telasco and Kusco and the beautiful Aztalpa.

Telasco and Kusco, sons of the King of the Sun-worshippers, were twins; and so both were equally near the throne. They loved each other devotedly; so which would give way for the other? Which of the two was to become Inca? Funeral pyres were built, one for each, and prayers were offered to the sun that one of the piles might be ignited. But the sun did not light either. He ordered that Aztalpa, the sister, should choose one. That one to whom she offered her hand should inherit the throne and the empire. But the princess could not decide, for she loved them both dearly and both equally. It was then decided that both should go out hunting on a certain morning, and that the one who killed the first doe should become king.

Telasco had red arrows, Kusco blue. The morning came. The brothers were lying in a thicket as the deer approached. Both fired, and both missed. Then they swore mutually not to miss intentionally the next time. They kept the oath, and two deer fell; but Telasco had shot one of Kusco's arrows, and Kusco one of Telasco's. Telasco then proposed that Aztalpa should be killed, to avoid any discord in the empire; and in the other world both would enjoy the same place in her affections. All agreed to this; but when the fatal day came, Aztalpa fell on her knees before Telasco and begged that she might receive her death at the hand of Kusco. Telasco cried: "Aztalpa, you have chosen!" All bowed down before Kusco; and when they looked for Telasco he had disappeared. He was never seen again.

Often Femke interrupted with questions, for there was much that was strange and wonderful to her; but she was charmed with the story and shared all of Walter's enthusiasm.

"I tell you, though, Walter, if that girl had known what Telasco was up to she wouldn't have done it. But the story is beautiful. I wonder if such things really happen."

"That was far from here, Femke, and a long time ago. That's just the way it was in the book. But now I must go home, for I haven't a stiver to pay the gate-keeper if I come in after eight. Oh, Femke—if I were only through with that poetry business."

"It will turn out all right, Just think of Telasco. He had a difficult task, too."

“No! I will think of the girl. Good-evening, Femke——”

Walter received the hearty kiss that his story had earned him, and dreaming of Aztalpa, who was guarding the linen, he passed through the Ash Gate and turned towards home. The moon shone so brightly that he was annoyed not to have been able to remain with Femke. How much better, he thought, could he have told his story by moonlight! But he didn't have the price—a stiver.



## CHAPTER XV

**T**HE moon paused on the sky, as if she were weary of her lonely lot. Was she grieved because ungrateful humanity had fallen asleep and was ignoring her?—or because of the light borrowed from her for thousands of years, and none returned? She poured forth her sorrow in heart-breaking noiseless elegies till the night-wind was moved to pity. Whish! he went through the trees; and the leaves danced. Crash! he went over the roof; and the tiles flew away, and chimneys bowed meekly; and over the walls and ditches the sawmills danced with the logs they were to saw. There a girl sat sleeping. Could it be Femke? The linen danced about her to the music of the wind, the shirts making graceful bows and extending their sleeves. Nightcaps, dickeys and drawers danced the minuet; stockings, skirts, collars, handkerchiefs waltzed thicker and thicker around the sleeping girl. Her curls began to flutter—a smile, a sigh, and she sprang to her feet. A whirlwind caught her up and—

“O, heavens, Femke, Femke!” and Walter grasped at the apparition that was being borne away towards the moon in a cloud of stockings, socks, drawers, shirts and collars.

“Mother! Walter’s pinching me,” cried Laurens,

the printer's apprentice; and Juffrouw Pieterse groaned, that those boys couldn't even keep quiet at night.

The "House of Pieterse" gathered at Walter's bed. There was the noble mother of the family enveloped in a venerable jacket that fell in broad folds over a black woolen skirt. There was Trudie, with her stupid blue eyes; and Myntje and Pietje—but what am I talking about? In the new home Trudie had become Gertrude, like a morgannatic princess in Hessia; and Myntje was now Mina, but preferred to be called Mine, as that sounded more Frenchy. But her stupid face remained unchanged. Pietje was now Pietro. Stoffel had said that was a very swell name.

Stoffel, too, had now appeared on the scene, to the great astonishment of his mother, who expected so much of him. This fine sense of propriety had been developed in the new home.

"What's the matter with you, boy?" cried everybody at once.

"Oh, mother, Femke—Femke!"

"The boy is foolish." That was the unanimous verdict of the family.

And they were not altogether wrong. Walter was delirious.

"They are carrying her away—around and around—Daughter of the Sun, decide—here is Telasco—thou shalt die, Aztalpa—Femke, stay, stay, I will watch the clothes—I will shoot the doe—a widower of God—together through the ivory gate—there she is again—stay, Omicron!"

"Ought we to call in a preacher?" asked Juffrouw

Pieterse hesitatingly. She didn't know whether praying was needed or a whipping—or both.

And now, perhaps for the first time in his life, Stoffel expressed a sensible thought: "Mother, we ought to have a doctor. Walter is sick."

Walter had nervous fever. It was fortunate for him that a doctor was called in, and still more fortunate that it was a man who understood Walter's mental troubles. He exerted a most wholesome influence on the boy; though this came later, as at first he could only treat the disease.

On Juffrouw Pieterse, too, he had a good influence. To her great astonishment, he explained to her that children ought not to be packed together in a bed as if they were superfluous pieces of furniture being thrown aside; that air, light, play, enjoyment, exercise are all necessary for the development of body and soul; that whipping does no good, and that she had better dispense with her "divine worship." He told her of other things she had never heard of; and she listened willingly, for the doctor—

"Ah, dear Juffrouw Laps, you must manage to be here when he comes. He writes the prescriptions with a gold pen; and his coachman wears a brown bear-skin cape."

That gold pen and the bear-skin cape! Ah, if everyone who preaches truth could only dress up his coachman so swell! But alas, alas—I know a great many people who love the truth, and they have no coachman at all—not to mention the bear-skin.

And gold pens often get into the wrong hands.

"I just wanted Juffrouw Zipperman to come some-

time when the doctor's here. Run and tell her, Gertrude, that I said Walter was sick, and say that we have lunch about twelve. He came about that time yesterday. And Leentje, you go to the grocer's—we need salt—have something to say about it—it's not just to be gossiping, you know—I despise gossip—but I would like to know if the people have noticed it. And you, Pietro, remember that you are to give me a clean cap when he comes—for the doctor is such an elegant gentleman, and such a doctor! And all that he said—I drank it all in. Mina, you mustn't stare at him again like that; it's not proper. But I'm curious to know if the people at the grocer's have seen him!"

I shouldn't like to be severe on her; but it seems to me that Juffrouw Pieterse was gradually beginning to take pleasure in Walter's illness.

There is something swell in having such a carriage standing before one's door.

Juffrouw Laps had come: "But dear Juffrouw Pieterse, what am I to do about my uncle? You are invited; and I have told him that there will be a poem."

"Very bad, Juffrouw Laps. You can see though that that poor worm can't write the poem. What about Stoffel? Why not ask him to write it?"

"It's all right with me. Just so it's a poem; otherwise I'm disgraced."

Stoffel was requested to take Walter's place, but he raised objections at once.

"You don't know what that would mean, mother. I would lose the respect of the boys. For anyone working with youth, respect is the main thing; and such a poem——"

“ But the boys at school need not know it.”

“ But the man would tell somebody and then—you don’t understand it. At the Diaconate school there was a fellow who wrote verses; and what has become of him? He went to India, mother, and he still owes me for half a bottle of ink. That’s the way it goes, mother. For me to write such a poem? No, no, mother—for a boy like Walter it’s all right; but when one is already a teacher!”

“ And Master Pennewip?” cried Juffrouw Laps.

“ The very man!” cried Stoffel, as if this supported his former argument. “ A happy thought! Master Pennewip will do it.”

“ I’ve read a poem by him, Stoffel.”

“ Yes, yes. And you’ve read a poem by him. That’s because—but how shall I explain that to you, Juffrouw Laps? You know that in teaching there are all kinds of things. Take Geography, for example. I will just mention one fact: Madrid is on the Man-ganares. Understand, mother?”

“ Yes, yes, Stoffel. That’s just as if you were to say——”

“ Amsterdam on the Y. Exactly so. And then there are many, many more things, Juffrouw Laps. You have no idea how much there is of it. A grocer mixes sugar with something else. He must calculate exactly what he must get for a pound in order not to lose money. Think of it! And then you have partnership, and breakage, and the verbs—but I must go before those rascals break everything.”

Stoffel returned to school earlier than usual, without having diminished Juffrouw Laps’s difficulties very

much. That poor woman could not comprehend how geography and Madrid and the grocer and partnerships made it impossible for Stoffel to write verses. Juffrouw Pieterse smoothed the matter over as well as she could and sent Juffrouw Laps to Master Pennewip.

That gentleman was alarmed when he saw the angry "sucking animal," but he quieted down as soon as he heard the object of her visit.

"To what class does your uncle belong, Juffrouw?"

"Why, to the class—you mean the mussel-shells and eggs?"

"No, no, Juffrouw, I mean on which rung of the ladder is he—how high up. I repeat it, on what rung—it's a figure, Juffrouw—on what rung of the social ladder?"

"In the grain business? Is that what you mean?"

"That is not sufficient, Juffrouw Laps. One may be in the grain business as a pastry cook, a baker, a retailer, a wholesaler, or as a broker; and all these vocations have their peculiar sub-divisions. Take Joseph in Egypt, for example. This man of God, whom some place in the class of patriarchs, while others claim—but let that be as it may. It is certain that Joseph bought corn and was on the topmost rung of the ladder, for we read in Genesis, chapter 41——"

"Yes, indeed, he rode in Pharaoh's carriage, and he wore a white silk coat. My uncle is an agent, and my father was the same."

"So-o-oo? Agent! That's something Moses doesn't mention, and I don't know in what class——" He spoke slowly, puzzling over his words.

“ Besides, my uncle is a widower.”

“ Ah, there we have the difference! We read that Joseph wooed Asnath, the daughter of Potiphar; but nowhere do we read that his spouse was already dead when he went into the corn business. Therefore, Juffrouw Laps, if it is your earnest desire to have a pious poem written on your uncle, I advise you to go to my pupil, Klaasje van der Gracht.”

He explained to her where that prodigy might be found.

Again I must beg pardon if my criticism of Pennewip is too severe; but he gave me reasons enough to harbor ugly suspicions against him. I am convinced that he would have written that poem for Juffrouw Laps if her uncle had received a white silk coat from the king, or had ever driven through The Hague in a royal carriage. But to sing an agent in verse! He would leave that to the genius of “ the flying tea-kettle ” in the Peperstraat. That was not nice of Pennewip. Was that uncle to blame because his brothers never threw him into a well? or sold him into Egypt? Or because he couldn't interpret dreams? Or because cleverness is not rewarded to-day with rings, white coats, carriages and high official position?

Juffrouw Laps footed it over to the Peperstraat, where she made the acquaintance of the elder van der Gracht. The old gentleman felt flattered.

He was most gracious, and assured the Juffrouw that the poem should be written that very evening. Klaasje could bring it over the next morning and repeat it to Juffrouw Laps, and if it were found worthy as an expression of her feelings toward her uncle, then

Klaasje was to be invited to be present on that evening. The father assured her that Klaasje would wear a white stand-up collar.

“Just like Joseph,” said the Juffrouw. “Everything is in the Bible.”

When she got home she read the forty-first chapter of Genesis, trying to find the relation of Klaasje's apotheosis to Joseph's exaltation. That night she dreamed she had a mantle in her hand.



## CHAPTER XVI

**I**T was the afternoon of the day on which Juffrouw Laps sought out Klaasje van der Gracht, and Walter was lying in bed, still weak but no longer delirious. The doctor had ordered rest and quiet. The child counted the flowers in the curtain, and, in his imagination tried to arrange them in some other order. He allowed them to jump over one another, or flow into one another. He saw in them faces, forms, armies, clouds—and all were alive and moving. It was tiresome, but he couldn't do anything else. If he turned his face toward the wall it was still worse. The hieroglyphic scratches on the wall told him all sorts of things that he didn't need to know and overwhelmed him with unnecessary impressions. He closed his eyes; but still he found no rest. It seemed to him as if he were being swept away to take part in that entertainment that the night-wind gave the moon. Everything was turning round and round, taking him along. He seized his head in both hands, as if he would stop his imagination by main strength; but it was useless. The curtains, the cords, the wall, the flowers, the dance, the whirlwind that tore Femke away—his efforts to hold her——

The boy burst into tears. He knew that it was all imagination; he knew that he was sick; he knew that

chimneys don't dance, and that girls are not blown to the moon; and yet——

Weeping he called Femke's name softly, not loud enough to be heard by the others, but loud enough to relieve his own depression.

"What's that?" he cried suddenly. "Does she answer? Is that imagination, too?"

Actually, Walter heard his name called, and it was Femke's voice!

"I must know whether I'm dreaming, or not," he said, and straightened himself up in bed. "That is a red flower, that is a black one, I am Walter, Laurens is a printer's apprentice—everything is all right; and I'm not dreaming."

He leaned out of bed and listened again, his mouth and eyes as wide open as he could get them, as if the senses of taste and sight were going to reinforce that of hearing.

O, God! Femke's voice! Yes, yes, it is Femke!" He jumped out of bed, ran out the door, and half ran, half fell down the steps.

To return to Femke for a little while. She had expected Walter at the bridge the next day after the story of the sun-worshippers. At first she thought that Walter was waiting till he could borrow from Stoffel the book with the picture showing Aztalpa embracing the two brothers. She wanted to see Walter with the picture; now she would have been satisfied with him without the picture. It couldn't be the boy's person, she thought—such a child!—but he did recite so well. Perhaps in the heart of the girl Walter and his recitals had already coalesced.

“Put the clothes in the sun,” cried her mother; and Femke translated that: Sun—Peru—Aztalpa—Kusco—Walter.

“Run those fighters away; they’ll throw dirt on the clothes.”

Femke dreamed: Courageously fighting against the enemies of the country—the noblest tribe of the Incas—Telasco—Walter.

Everything seemed to be calling for Walter; but he did not come.

The first day she was sad; the second, impatient; the third, restless.

“Mother, I’m going to see what’s become of the little boy who was going to write a poem.”

“Do, my child!” said the mother. “Do you think you will find him?”

Femke nodded; but her nod was not convincing. She did not know where Walter lived and was afraid to say so. It took courage to start out to trace the child when she didn’t know where he lived; and this courage she wished to conceal. And why? Just timidity incident to the tender feelings. Sometimes we conceal the good and boast of the bad.

The girl dressed herself as prettily as she could and put all her money in her pocket. It was only a few stivers. She hurried through Ash Gate and inquired where the shop was that lent books. Thus she came directly to the Hartenstraat. She simply retraced the steps of our hero, when he made that first sally with Glorioso.

Less timid than Walter—Femke was older, and had had more experience with men—she asked the gruff

fellow in a business-like way for "the book about the countess with the long train or her dress."

"What? What's the title?"

"I don't know," Femke said. "It's about a robber—and the Pope's mentioned in it, too. I am hunting for the boy who read the book. I wanted to ask where he lives—I will pay you for your trouble."

"Do you think I'm a fool? Am I here to hunt for boys?"

"But, M'neer, I will pay you," the girl said, and laid the money on the counter.

"Oh, get on! What do I know about your boy?"

Femke got angry now.

"I haven't done anything, and you can't run me off like that. No, you can't. If you don't want to tell me, you needn't to. You are an unaccommodating fellow!"

She was going to leave, when it occurred to her to ask, "And won't you lend me a book, either?"

"Yes, you can get a book. What do you want?"

"That book about the robber and Amalia," said Femke. She felt now that she was a "customer," and oh, how proud she had become all at once!

"I don't know anything about such a book. Do you mean Rinaldo Rinaldini?"

"No. Is there more than one robber book? Just call over the names of them for me."

This was said with an air of importance that was not without its effect on the shopman. He pulled down the catalogue, and soon he came to "Glorioso."

"That's it, that's it!" cried Femke, delighted.

"But you must deposit a forfeit," the man said, as he mounted the ladder to get that precious book.

"No, no, I don't want the book at all. I only want to know where the boy lives who read it. I will pay you gladly," and she pointed to her money.

"That isn't necessary," he said. "I don't mind accommodating you when you ask me politely."

He looked in the register and found the name Femke had mentioned, with the address. He showed it to her, and was even going to explain to her the best way to get there; but Femke was already out the door. The fellow had difficulty in overtaking her to return the money she had forgotten on the counter.

When she reached the address given, Femke learned that the Pieterses had moved to a "sweller neighbourhood." It was quite a distance away; but Femke was not deterred by that.

Once at the Pieterses', she was received by the young ladies with a rough, "What do you want?"

"Oh, Juffrouw, I wanted to ask about Walter."

"Who are you?"

"I am Femke, Juffrouw, and my mother is a wash-woman. I would like to know if Walter is all right."

"What have you got to do with Walter?" asked Juffrouw Pieterse, who had heard the commotion and come down.

"Ah, Juffrouw, don't be angry—I wanted to know; and my mother knows that I've come to ask. Walter told me about Telasco, and the girl that was to die—oh, Juffrouw, tell me if he's sick! I cannot sleep till I know."

“That’s none of your business. Go, I tell you! I don’t want strange people standing around the door.”

“For mercy’s sake, Juffrouw!” cried the girl, wringing her hands.

“The girl’s crazy. Put her out, Trudie, and slam the door!”

Trudie began to execute the order. Myntje and Pietje got ready to help her; but the child clung to the balustrade and held her ground.

“Throw her out! The impudent thing!”

“Oh, Juffrouw, I’m not impudent. I will go. Just tell me whether Walter is sick. Tell me, and I will go right now. Just tell me if he’s sick—if, if he’s going—to die.”

The poor child began to weep. Anybody else but those Pieterse women would have been touched at the sight. They were too far up the ladder.

Plainer people, or nobler people would have understood Femke. Feeling, sympathy, is like the money in a gambling-place. It doesn’t come to everybody. There wenches and countesses sit side by side; merely respectable people, who sell shoes made in Paris, are not there.

“I won’t go!” cried Femke. “Oh, God! I won’t go! I will know whether that child is sick!”

A door was heard opening above; and Walter came in sight. He tumbled down the steps and fell unconscious at Femke’s feet.

“That boy!” groaned the old lady, while the girls stood as if transfixed. Femke picked Walter up and carried him upstairs. His bed was pointed out to

her, and she placed him in it. No one had the courage to run her away when she took a chair by the bedside. If at this moment the rights of the Pieterses and Femke had been voted upon, all the votes would have gone to Femke.

She wept, and stammered "Don't be angry, Juf-frouw; but I couldn't sleep for thinking of him."

## CHAPTER XVII

**T**HE evening of the birthday party came. All of the Pieterses went, leaving Walter to be taken care of by Leentje.

Juffrouw Laps was doing the honors.

“A strange state of affairs,” said the birthday uncle. “And what did she want?”

“Oh, goodness, M’neer, I don’t know myself. I’ve told Gertrude a hundred times that it’s too much for me. Just imagine to yourself—such a thing issuing commands in my house! I told Mina to pitch her out. And Pietro said——”

“You ought to have seen me get hold of her,” croaked that brave young woman, showing a blue place on her hand. From this it might have been inferred that Femke had had hold of Pietro.

“Just wait till she comes again,” cried Gertrude, “and I will attend to her!”

“And what will I do for her?” said Mina significantly.

Every one of them was ready for the fray. That is often the case. If the vote had been taken now on moral worth, Femke would have been defeated.

“A common girl, M’neer!”

“Worse than common!”

“How did you get rid of her?”

“Ah, it wasn’t easy. I said——”



“No, mother, I said——”

“No, it was I!”

“But it was I!”

Each one of them had said something. Everyone wanted to play the leading rôle in the interesting drama.

“I would like to know where the young Mr. van der Gracht is,” said Juffrouw Laps. “Yes, uncle, it’s a surprise——”

Juffrouw Pieterse did not like to be interrupted when she had something to tell.

“And so we said—what did we say, Gertrude?”

“Mother, I said it was a disgrace.”

“Yes, I said so, too. Then that thing asked for cold water, and when we didn’t get it quick enough for her, she ran and fetched it herself—just as if she were at home! She wet a cloth and put it on Walter’s head. I was amazed at her insolence. When the child came to she gave him a kiss! Think of it—and all of us standing there!”

“Yes,” cried the three daughters, “think of it—and us standing there!”

“Then she sat down in front of the bed again and talked to him.”

“Where can the young Mr. van der Gracht be!” sighed Juffrouw Laps. “It’s only because we have a little surprise, uncle.”

“And finally she went away like a princess!”

“Exactly like a princess,” testified the girls; and they did not know that they were telling the truth.

“And she told Walter she would come again. But I just want to see her do it!”

The door-bell rang. Juffrouw Laps arose; and the catechist van der Gracht with his son walked into the room. Juffrouw Pieterse didn't like this; she felt that the star of her narration would pale in the light of the poem Klaasje had brought with him. And even without a poem: such dignity, such a carriage, such manners, such a voice!

"Mynheer and Juffrouwen, may God bless you all this evening! This is my son Klaas, of whom you have heard, I suppose. He's too close kin to me for me to praise him; but you understand—when it's the father—well, all blessings come from above."

"Yes, uncle, it will be a surprise."

"Yes, indeed, Juffrouw, a beautiful surprise. I congratulate this gentleman on the happy return of his natal day. It puts me in the mood of the psalmist—and I thank God—for Mynheer, everything comes from above, you know."

"Take a seat. I thank you," said the host, who understood that he had been congratulated. "It's cold out, isn't it?"

"Yes, a little cool; hardly cold. It's just what we call cool, you understand. The Master gives us weather as he sees fit; and for that reason I say cool. Everything comes from above."

To this last statement all assented in audible sighs and thought themselves pious. What would have happened to him if some poor devil had announced to them that some things come from below?

"And now, uncle, what do you say? Shall we begin with the surprise?"

"Go ahead, niece; what have you got?"

“ Oh, it’s only a trifle, Mynheer,” put in the cate-chist. “ My son is a poet. I don’t praise him, because he’s too close kin to me; but he’s a clever fellow—I can say that without bragging—for everything comes from above. No, I won’t praise him—praise is for the Master alone. But he’s a clever fellow.”

The poet Klaas looked conscious, and sat toying with the bottom button on his vest. He looked poetical all over.

“ And so, Mynheer, without bragging—get it out, my son. As a father, Mynheer, I may say that he’s a clever fellow; for in the Bible——”

Klaasje drew a piece of paper from his pocket.

“ In the Bible there is really nothing said about widowers—the Master has his own good reasons for it—but what does the boy do? He takes the hint and writes a whole poem on widows.”

Klaasje laid the paper on the table.

“ Yes, I dare say, he has brought into it all the widows mentioned in the Bible.”

“ You see it’s a surprise. I told you so,” said Juf-frouw Laps.

“ Read it, Klaasje! There are seventy, Mynheer, seventy widows. Read, my boy.”

Klaas pulled at his clothes, arranged his cuffs and began:

‘The widows that in the Bible appear,  
I’ve brought together in this poem here,  
For the birthday that we celebrate  
Of him who sadly lost his mate,  
Exalting always the Master of Love,  
For all that we have comes from above.’

“That’s the prologue,” explained the father.

“Yes, that’s the prologue. Now I will read:

“Genesis, 38, verse 11, it is said:

At her father-in-law’s must the widow have her bed.

Exodus, 20, 22, it is penned:

Widows and orphans thou shalt not offend.

Two verses further he threatens, wrathful and grim

To make widows of all the women that anger him.

Leviticus, 21, verse 14, thou read’st

That a widow won’t do for the wife of a priest.

A chapter further, one verse less, we have read,

That a childless widow must eat her father’s bread.

From Numbers, 30, verse 10, we clearly infer,

That a widow’s vow is sufficient for her.”

In this style he continued glibly, without any interruption; but when he came to:

“Second Samuel, 20, 3, very clearly outlines,

That as widows must live David’s concubines——”

Juffrouw Pieterse became restless and had to have an explanation.

“Yes, Juffrouw, concubines,” said van der Gracht senior. “You see the boy has brought in everything relating to widows.”

“The verses are not the same length,” Stoffel complained; and there is no alternation of masculine and feminine lines.”

“You may be right, Stoffel, for you are a school-teacher; but that’s immaterial to me. These—these con—what shall I say——”

“Juffrouw Pieterse, you ought not to mock at it,” cried Juffrouw Laps.

"That's right," said the catechist, "all blessings come from above. Go ahead, Klaas!"

"No, I will not hear such things—on account of my daughters!"

The girls were examining their finger nails, and looked preëminently respectable.

"Go ahead, Klaas!"

"If I had known that this was going to happen, I would have left my daughters at home."

"But, Juffrouw, it's in the Bible. You're not opposed to the Bible, are you?"

"No, but I refuse to hear anything that isn't respectable. My husband——"

"Your husband sold shoes. I know it, Juffrouw, but you're not going to turn against——"

"I'm not going to do anything against the Bible, but I will not endure such coarseness. Come, Gertrude, come, children!"

Juffrouw Pieterse was climbing the ladder of respectability: Moving out of a side street into one of the principal avenues, giving the children French names, calling in a doctor whose coachman wears furs—that is what lifts us up.

## CHAPTER XVIII

**W**ALTER'S illness now took a favorable turn. As soon as he was strong enough to leave his bed, the whole family noticed that he had grown. All remarked about it and called each other's attention to it. No one was better convinced of the fact than Juffrouw Pieterse; for "that boy" had "outgrown all of his clothes," and it would not be easy "to fit him out respectably again." So much interesting notoriety and respectability had been reaped from Walter's illness that it was only natural that his convalescence should be turned to the best account.

The child would sit and fill in the colors in pictures. The doctor had presented him the pictures and a box of colors. The latter, so Stoffel said, were the genuine English article.

Oh, such pictures!

Walter was interested especially by pictures from the opera and the tragedy. There were pictures from Macbeth, Othello, Lear, Hamlet, from "The Magic Flute," "The Barber of Seville," "Der Freischütz," and from still a few more—each one always more romantic than the last. In selecting suitable colors for his heroes and heroines, Walter had the advice of the entire family, including Leentje. Usually there was disagreement, but that only made the matter more important. In only two details were they agreed: faces

and hands were to have flesh-color, and lips were to be painted red. It had always been that way; otherwise, why was it called flesh-color? On account of this arrangement Hamlet came off rather badly, receiving a much more animated countenance than was suited to his melancholy.

"I wish I knew what the dolls mean," said Walter. He was talking about his pictures.

"It's only necessary to ask Stoffel," his mother replied. "Wait till he comes from school."

Walter asked him. Stoffel—there are more such people in the world—would never admit that he did not know a thing; and he always knew how to appear knowing.

"What the dolls mean? Well, you see—those are, so to say, the pictures of various persons. There, for instance, the one with a crown on his head—that is a king."

"I told you Stoffel could explain them," corroborated his mother.

"Yes, but I should have liked to know what king, and what he did."

"Well! There it is at the bottom. You can read it, can't you?"

"Macbeth?"

"Certainly. It's Macbeth, a famous king of ancient times."

"And that one there with a sword in his hand?"

"Also a king, or a general, or a hero, or something of the kind—somebody that wants to fight. Perhaps David, or Saul, or Alexander the Great. That's not to be taken so exactly."

“And the lady with the flowers? She seems to be tearing them up.”

“That one? Show her to me: Ophelia. Yes, that’s Ophelia. Don’t you know?”

“Yes. Why does she throw the leaves on the ground?”

“Why? why? The questions you do ask!”

Here the mother came to the rescue of her eldest son.

“Yes, Walter, you mustn’t ask more questions than anybody can answer.”

Walter did not ask any more questions, but he determined to get to the bottom of the matter at the first opportunity. His imagination roamed over immeasurable domains—such an insatiate conqueror was the little emperor Walter in his night-jacket!

He associated the heroes of his pictures with the doctor, who had been so friendly to him, and with his immortal Glorioso. The Peruvian story, too, furnished a few subjects for his empire. He married Telasco to Juliet; and the priests of the sun got their rights again. Master Pennewip received a new wig, but of gold-colored threads, on the model of the straw crown of a certain King Lear. Persons that he could see from the window were numbered among his subjects. He had to do something; and this foreign material was preferable to that in his immediate surroundings. Even Lady Macbeth, who was washing her hands and not looking particularly pleasing, seemed to him to be of a higher order than his mother or Juffrouw Laps.



In fact, for him those pictures were the greatest things in the world. He was carried away with the crowns, diadems, plumes, iron gratings over the faces, with the swords and the daggers with cross-hilts to swear on—with the trains and puff-sleeves and girdles with pendants of gold—and the pages. All this had nothing in common with his everyday surroundings. How is it possible, he thought, that anyone who has such beautiful pictures should sell them? The doctor must have inherited them!

Even if he had known that Lady Macbeth was the personification of crime, it would still have seemed to him a profanation to bring her into contact with the plebeian commonness around him.

All at once something in Ophelia's form reminded him of Femke. She too could stand that way, plucking the petals from the flowers and strewing them on the ground.

He had dim recollections of what had happened, and occasionally he would ask indifferently about "that girl." He was afraid to speak her name before Gertrude, Mina, and Pietro. He was always answered in tones that showed him that there was no room for his romance there; but he promised himself to visit her as soon as he got up.

"When you're better you must go to see the doctor and thank him for curing you—but thank God first; and then you can show him what you've painted."

"Of course, mother! I will give her the Prince of Denmark—I mean him, the doctor."

"But be careful not to soil it; and don't forget that

the ghost of the old knight must be very pale. Stoffel said so—because it's a ghost, you see."

"Yes, mother, I'll make it white."

"Good. And you'll make the lady there yellow?" pointing with a knitting-needle to Ophelia.

"No, no," cried Walter quickly, "she was blue!"

"She was? Who was?"

"I only mean that I have so much yellow already, and I wanted to make her—this one—Ophelia—I wanted to make her blue. That one washing her hands can stay yellow."

"So far as I'm concerned," the mother said, "but don't soil it!"

Stoffel, in the meantime, had got on the track of those pictures. He was slick and had an inquiring mind. One of his colleagues at school, who was in some way connected with the stage, told him that such costume-pictures were of great value to players. He also told him other things about these pictures and about the play in general.

It was fortunate for Walter that Stoffel brought this knowledge home with him. Even to-day there are people who find something immoral in the words "Theatre" and "Player"; but at that time it was still worse. The satisfaction, however, of imparting knowledge and appearing wise put Stoffel in an attitude of mind on this occasion that ordinarily would have been irreconcilable with that narrowness which with him took the place of conscience.

"You see, mother, there are comedies and comedies. Some are sad, some funny. Some are all nonsense, and there's nothing to be learned from them; but there

are comedies so sad that the people wail when they see them—even respectable people!”

“Is it possible!”

“Yes, and then there are others where there’s music and singing. They are nice, and moral too. They are called operas; and people who are entirely respectable go there. You see, mother, there’s nothing bad about it; and we ought not to be so narrow. The old Greeks had comedies, and our professors still study them.”

“Is it possible!”

“Walter’s pictures are from real comedies; but I can’t tell all the details now. I will only say there are good comedies.”

“You must tell Juffrouw Laps. She always says——”

“And what does she know about it? She never saw a comedy in her life.”

That was the truth; but it was just as true of the Pieterse family—with the exception of Leentje.

One afternoon Leentje had complained of a terrible headache and had left off sewing and gone out. Later it was learned that she had not spent the evening with her mother; and then there was a perfect storm. But Leentje would not say where she had been that night. “That night” was Juffrouw Pieterse’s expression, though she knew that the girl was at home by eleven o’clock. Leentje betrayed nothing. She had promised the dressmaker next door not to say anything; for the dressmaker had to be very careful, because her husband was a hypocrite.

In Leentje’s work-box was found a mutilated pro-

gram; and then one day she began to sing a song she had never sung before—"I'm full of honor, I'm full of honor; oh, yes, I'm a man of honor!"

And then it was all out! She had been to the Elandstraat and had seen the famous Ivan Gras in a comedy!

Leentje began to cry and was going to promise never to do so again, when, to her amazement, she was told that there was nothing wrong in it, and that even the greatest professors went to see comedies.

And now she must tell them about it.

It was "The Child of Love," By Kotzebue, that had greeted her astonished eyes.

"There was music, Juffrouw, and they played beautifully; and then the curtain went up, and there was a great forest, and a woman wept under a tree. There was a Baron who made her son a prisoner, because he was a hunter—but he spoke so nice, and his mother, too. The Baron said he was master on his place, and that he would punish such thieves. He was in a great rage. And then the mother said—no, somebody else came and said—but then the curtain went down. The dressmaker bought waffles that were being passed around, and we drank chocolate. The dressmaker said that every day wasn't a feast day. A man sat behind us and explained everything and took our cups when they were empty. Then the band played, 'Pretty girls and pretty flowers.'"

"Shame!" cried the three young ladies. For it was a common street song.

"And then the curtain went up again of its own

accord; but the gentleman behind us said somebody raised it—perhaps the ‘Child of Love’ himself, for he was not in prison when the curtain was down. The dressmaker gave him a peppermint-drop, and he said: ‘Watch the stage, Juffrouw, for you have paid to see it.’ It cost twelve stivers, without the waffles and chocolate. Then the Baron said—but I can’t tell it all exactly as it was. I will only say that the old woman wept all the time, and she could not be reconciled, because she was so unhappy. You see, Juffrouw, the child of love was her own child; and it was also the Baron’s child of love. That was bad—because it was just a child of love, you see; and that is always bad. He had no papers, no credentials; nor the mother, either. And he was to die because he had hunted. Oh, it was beautiful, Juffrouw! And then the curtain went down again and we ate another waffle. The gentleman behind us said it was well that they gave plays with prison scenes in them. There were so many bad people in the hall, such as pickpockets and the like, and this would be a warning for them. The dressmaker was going to offer him another mint-drop, when she saw that her box was gone. It was silver. The gentleman said of course some pickpocket had taken it.”

“He was the pickpocket!” exclaimed several.

Leentje was indignant at the idea.

“No, no! Don’t say that; it’s a sin. He was a very respectable gentleman, and addressed me as Juffrouw, just as he did the dressmaker. He tried to find the thief. He asked where the Juffrouw lived,

and said that if he found the box he would bring it to her. He wore a fancy vest—no, no, no. Don't say that of him!"

"Well, tell some more about the child of love." All were interested.

"Oh, the music was so nice! And a gentleman showed them with a stick how to play."

"But tell us about the comedy!"

"That is not so easy. It was very beautiful. It must be seen; it can't be told. The Baron saw that the hunter in prison was his own son; because a long time before, you see, that is—formerly, he had been acquainted with—you understand——"

Poor Leentje turned as red as fire, and left her audience in a temporary suspense.

"Yes, he had know the old woman formerly, and then they were good friends, and were often together—I will just tell it that way—and they were to marry, but something came between them; and so—and—for that reason the comedy was called the 'Child of Love.'"

Walter listened with as much interest as the others; but he was less affected than the girls, who sat quietly staring into space. Stoffel felt called upon to say something.

"That's it! He abused her chastity—that's the way it's spoken of—and she was left to bear the disgrace. The youth of to-day cannot be warned enough against this. How often have I told the boys at school!"

"Listen, Walter, and pay attention to what Stoffel says!"

Encouraged by the approval of his mother, Stoffel continued.

“Yes, mother, virtue must be revered. That is God’s will ; and what God does is well done. Of all sins sensual pleasure is—a very great sin, because it is forbidden; and because all sins are punished, either in this world or in the next.”

“Do you hear, Walter?”

“Here, or in the next world, mother! Innocent pleasure, yes; but sensual pleasure—it is forbidden! It loosens all the ties of human society. You see that such a comedy can be very fine. Only you must understand it properly—that’s the idea.”

“And what did the Baron do then?”

“Ah, Juffrouw, what shall I say! He talked a whole lot to the old woman, and was very sad because he had—away back there—because he had——”

“Seduced her,” added Stoffel, seeing that Leentje couldn’t find the word. “That’s what it’s called.”

“Yes, that’s what she said, too; and he promised never to do it again. And then he told the child of love always to follow the path of virtue, and that he would marry the old woman. She was satisfied with the arrangement.”

“I suppose so,” cried the three girls in a breath. “She will be a rich baroness!”

“Yes,” said Leentje, “she became a great lady. And then the child of love fell on the Baron’s neck; and they played ‘Bridal Wreath.’ The ‘Child of Love’ became a hussar and sang, ‘I’m full of honor, I’m full of honor; Oh, I’m a man of honor!’”

I don't know what became of the old Baron. And then we went home; but the dressmaker took no more pleasure in the play now, because her silver box was gone. I don't know whether the gentleman ever brought it to her, or not."

The play was out.

The girls thought: "Baroness!"

Stoffel was thinking: "Virtue!"

The mother's thoughts ran: "Twelve stivers for a ticket, and waffles and chocolate extra!"

Walter was saying to himself: "A hunter! A whole year in the forest, in the great forest, and alone. I'd like to do it, too."

He took up his brush and looked at Ophelia: "To be alone in the great forest with—Femke!"

But the theatre question was far from being settled. Leentje had to clear up many doubtful points yet. For instance, Pietro wanted to know how old the woman was when the Baron finally married her. Leentje thought she must have been about sixty.

Also Juffrouw Laps had to express her opinion. She declared that she was opposed to everything "worldly," and insisted that Walter be sent to church.

Later she got into a big dispute over the theatre with Master Pennewip, whom Stoffel had brought in to reinforce his position. He had brought with him "Floris the Fifth," that powerful comedy by the noble Bilderdijk. With many declensions and conjugations and remarks on rhyme and metre, he explained, firstly, that "Floris the Fifth" was a play from which much



could be learned; and, secondly, that the theatre was something very moral and thoroughly respectable.

To be sure, he failed to convince Juffrouw Laps. Nor was Walter greatly impressed by that masterpiece, despite the fact that there were three deaths in it. He much preferred the beautiful story of Glorioso, or the Peruvian story—or even Little Red Riding-hood.

## CHAPTER XIX

**W**ALTER had been to church: that was now behind him. Stoffel thought the pastor had preached a beautiful sermon, and said that "in a way all he said could be accepted." He hoped that it would "bear fruit."

"Yes," said the mother, "and he mustn't tear his new breeches again. They cost too much hard work for that."

As a matter of fact the "hard work" done in the Pieterse family might be regarded as a negligible quantity. There was the necessary housework, and the usual complaining—or boasting, if you will—but this was to be expected.

That Walter had postponed his visit to go to church was a result of the frightful threats of Juffrouw Laps. She cited Second Chronicles xvi. 12, and in the face of this text the Pieterses were not able successfully to defend their new and more liberal position. Juffrouw Pieterse could only say that the Bible was not to be interpreted that way, as if everything in it applied to a given individual.

But Juffrouw Laps stuck to it, that if one has faith and grace one may come through all right; whereupon Juffrouw Pieterse expressed her willingness at all times to take advice.

"Those are the essential things; through them we are saved! And—send him to me the first of the week.

Or he can come Sunday, but after church. Then he can tell me about the sermon, even if the pastors are—but what does a child know about it!”

Juffrouw Laps didn't think much of pastors. She held that people with grace in their hearts can understand God's word without Greek and Latin.

“Yes, Sunday after church. I will count upon it.” And in order to make her invitation more insistent she mentioned certain sweets that she usually served her guests at that time.

Supposing that Juffrouw Laps was really anxious for Walter to come, we must admit that she showed deep knowledge of boy-nature.

As for Walter, he was afraid to be alone with this pious lady. For him she was the living embodiment of all the plagues that are made use of in the Old Testament to convert rebellious tribes to the true faith. For instance, thunder and lightning, pestilence, abysses, boils, flaming swords, etc.

If he had had the courage he would have asked her just to deposit the promised dainties somewhere outside of her flat. He would find them then. But he didn't have the courage.

“And why didn't you go?” asked the mother when Stoffel's enthusiasm over the sermon had begun to die down.

Walter said he had a pain in his stomach, which children always have when they want to bridge over disagreeable duties. With a better understanding between the parents and children this disease would be less frequent.

“I don't believe you have any pain in your stomach,”

declared the mother. "It's only because you're a bad child and never do what you're told to do."

Stoffel agreed with her; and then a council of war was held. Walter was condemned to go to Juffrouw Laps's at once; and he went.

Expecting some terrible ordeal, he was greatly embarrassed and confused by the show of friendliness with which he was received.

"And you did come, my dear boy! But you are so late! Church has been out a long time. See what I have for you, expressly for *you!*"

She thrust him into a chair at the table and shoved all sorts of sweets over to him. Walter's embarrassment increased; and he felt even less at ease when she began to stroke him and call him pet names.

"Now, tell me about the sermon," she said, when the child tried to escape the tenderness and affection to which he was not accustomed. "What did the pastor say?"

"The text——"

"But that's all right—afterwards, when your mouth is empty. You must eat a few cakes first. Nobody can do everything at once. There is chocolate; and you're to have a little dram, too. I've always said that you are a nice boy; but they're forever plaguing you so. But you're not eating enough; do just as if you were at home."

For Walter that was not the right expression. At home!

His first surprise over Walter began to be possessed by a feeling of fear. Why, he could not have told to save him.

Suddenly he got up and declared that his mother had told him not to stay long.

There wasn't a word of truth in it. Juffrouw Laps protested, but Walter held his ground. Despite all of that kindness Walter was able to escape from the enemy.

Promising "to come back soon" he ran down the steps and into the street.

An indescribable feeling of freedom regained thrilled through him. He had escaped. It was incomprehensible even to him. Never had he been received so kindly, so cordially; never had he been treated in a manner approaching this. But why his antipathy? When he left she was going to kiss him, but he managed to dodge her. Why? He didn't know. But it made him shudder to think of it.

Should he go home now? What excuse could he give for coming back so soon?

Involuntarily he bent his steps toward Ash Gate. It was not his intention to visit Femke—not at all, really not! For he didn't have his Ophelia with him—proof conclusive that when he left home he had not thought of Femke.

And when he came in sight of his mills on the Buitensingel—oh, they were silent! Was there no wind? Or were they observing Sunday?

The Buitensingel was full of people taking a Sunday stroll. Walter followed the small stream, which led him towards Femke's house. Soon he stood before the low enclosure; but he did not dare to go in. Why? He put the blame on the absent Ophelia.

"If I only had that picture here I'd certainly go in!"

That is questionable. Even with the picture he would have probably been just as shy. He didn't know what he ought to say—or, better, whether he could say anything, or not. He reflected. Suppose Femke's mother should ask, "Did you want anything?"

We—yes, the "gentle reader" and I—we should have known what to answer. I wonder if our wisdom would have been wiser than the stupidity of the child, who stood irresolute and hesitating before the fence?

He stood staring at the house, his mouth wide open. His knees trembled, his heart fluttered, his tongue was dry.

A small column of smoke curling up from the chimney aroused him. What if a fire should break out! Then he would have to go in. He would rescue her, and carry her away in his arms—far, far away—to the end of the world, or at least outside of the town! Just anywhere where the people wear red velvet and green silk, where the gentlemen carry big swords and the ladies wear long trains. They would be so becoming to Femke. And she should ride horseback, and he would follow her—no, he would ride by her side, with a falcon on his hand!

If a fire should break out!

But Walter saw that the house was in no danger. This smoke came from the kitchen. He noticed other houses in the neighborhood where cooking seemed to be going on, and everywhere the chimneys were bearing witness to activities below which were presumably similar to those of Femke.

Finally a crowd of fellows came along who had

evidently been stopping at one of those establishments where "refreshments" are served. They had been greatly refreshed, and in their exuberance of freshness, so to say, they crowded Walter away from the fence and took him along with them for a little way.

He was easily reconciled to this; for why, he thought, should he stand there and watch the smoke? There wasn't going to be any fire; and then he didn't have Ophelia with him.

But to-morrow! To-morrow he would bring that picture with him! And then he wouldn't stand at the fence like a baby.

He felt ashamed when he thought of his friends in their gay colors, or in armor, with plumes and swords. Those kings and knights and pages—they had been courageous, otherwise they never would have received such high orders and distinctions. Unless there were some change, he felt that he would never be pictured like that.

However, he expected that such a change would come—without doubt, surely, certainly, truly! The further he went, the more determined he became to go in the next day and put on a bold front and say: "Good-day, Juffrouw, how do you do?"

It was more difficult for him to decide what he would say to Femke.

He made up various little speeches in the manner of Floris the Fifth. In case Femke shouldn't like them he was going to say, "Why, that is from our greatest poet."

And then he would ask her to explain a lot of mys-

terious words in Floris that he hadn't understood—for instance, "fast fellow," "coverture," "chastity," and others.

Walter's development was determined by his desire to know things. His feeling for Femke, which was hardly real love, was subordinated to his thirst for knowledge. He knew that he couldn't get much from her, especially book-learning; but it was a pleasure merely to discuss things with her, even if she knew nothing about them.

He was curious to know all that she might have to tell him, or to ask him; for no doubt she too had been saving up her impressions for her first friend. But, alas! he was not so certain of her friendship! True, when he was sick she had asked about him; but perhaps she was just passing by, and thought how easy it would be to ring the bell and ask, "How is Walter?"

Still it had taken courage to do it. What would Mungo Park have said if he had seen him hesitating before the gate! Walter knew that wasn't the way to conquer the world.

And if anybody had asked Mungo Park: "What do you want in Africa?"

Well, he would have answered. Such a traveller in such a book is never embarrassed.

Then Walter began to address all sorts of remarks to negro kings that he had conquered with lance and sword. All the women kissed his hand as he rode by on his bay, with fiery red caparison. He inquired patronizingly after those good girls who had nursed him in his illness, "because the strange white man was



far from mother and sisters and had no home." He would reward them princely.

In all this conquered land Walter was king and Femke was—queen! How magnificent the big red velvet cloak would look on her—and the gold crown!

Conquering continents was easy. He was scarcely thirteen; and yet he was afraid that somebody might get ahead of him while he was being detained by the treacherous Pennewip with declensions and conjugations. And, then there were still more things to learn before one could be king, even of a small country. Pocket-change would have to be increased too, for, with all possible economy, six doits a week were insufficient. The Hallemins—well, they had more; but fortunately they were not thinking of Africa. For the present he was not afraid of any competition from that quarter; but other children, nearer the "grown-up" stage, might get the idea in their heads! And then, what would he do to keep his mother from guessing when he made his trips into the "interior" longer, and stayed out later than was allowed by the regulations of the Pieterse household?

It was a difficult matter, but he would manage it.

All that might happen to him and Femke in Africa would be read afterwards in pretty little books with colored pictures. He already saw himself sitting on a throne, and Femke by his side. She was not proud; she was willing for everybody to know—all those kneeling before her—that she had been a poor wash-girl. She had become queen because Walter had loved her; and now they needn't kneel any more.

On special occasions—well, of course, that was different; for instance, when his mother and Stoffel came to visit him. They should see how all the people honored him—and Femke whom they had treated so badly. But once would be enough; then he would forgive them everything and build them a big house with water-barrels and wash-tubs. For Pennewip he would build a big schoolhouse, with desks and ink-bottles and copy-books and wall maps of Europe and tables of the new weights and measures. Then the old master could give instruction from early in the morning till late at night—or even all night.

He was just puzzling over how he was going to reconcile Master Pennewip and the dusky young African to one another when Leentje opened the door.

Without noticing it he had got home and rung the door-bell. Unsuspectingly he fell into an environment quite different from that in which he had moved for the last half hour. He scarcely understood what his mother meant when she asked him how the visit turned out, and whether Juffrouw Laps was satisfied with his report on the sermon.

Sermon? Laps? He was unprepared for such an examination. He stammered out a sort of miscellaneous and irrelevant jumble of words, but fortunately containing nothing about Africa.

It now developed that in the meantime there had been a sudden change in certain details of religious belief.

“You see, mother?” said Stoffel. “Just as I’ve always said, it would take a lawyer to explain anything to suit her. She always knows better——”

“That’s so,” answered the mother. “She’s cracked

or crazy. Now, just tell me, Stoffel, if anyone can expect such a child to remember everything a preacher says. I can't do it myself; and you can't do it, either. Master Pennewip can't do it. I tell you, nobody can do it. And to require that of such a child! She just wants to play the professor; that's the reason she does it."

Stoffel was of the same opinion. Encouraged by his sympathy the mother became eloquent.

"I would like to know what she's thinking about; or if she thinks she's a pastor. With all her biblical quotations! And then to torment a child hardly out of a sick bed—it's a disgrace. You don't need to go to her. What business have you got with her? I tell you——"

Here it occurred to her that she herself had compelled Walter to go, and she interrupted this line of thought to scold Walter and tell him to get out of his Sunday breeches. Her dissatisfaction with herself expressed itself further in a funeral oration on Walter's last suit, which had cost so much "hard work."

"And then to let that child sit there for an hour without anything to eat or drink! She would——"

Walter's feeling for justice couldn't let that pass. He assured them that on the contrary—and then that excessive kindness got in his way again. In his confusion he went into all the details of the chocolate.

"Well! Why didn't you say so at once? But it's all the same. I was going to add that she ought to have given you something to eat. That's the way such folks are—always grumbling about others and they won't see themselves. I believe in grace too, and when

I have my housework done I like to hear the Scripture read—but to be everlastingly and eternally prating about it? No, that isn't religion. What do you say, Stoffel? One must work part of the time. Walter! aren't you going to pull off those new breeches? I've told him a dozen times. Trudie, give him his old ones!"

Walter changed his breeches; but he promised himself that in Africa he would wear Sunday breeches every day.

## CHAPTER XX

**T**HE next day Walter rang the doctor's door-bell. His heart was in a flutter, for the doctor lived in an imposing house. He was admitted and, after he had been announced, was told just to come upstairs.

The maid conducted Walter to the "study," where the doctor was busy performing one of his paternal duties: he was teaching his children.

There were three. A boy, somewhat older than Walter, sat alone in one corner writing at a small table. The other two, a boy of Walter's age and a girl that seemed to be a few years younger, stood before the table behind which the doctor was sitting. On the table stood a large globe, evidently the subject of discussion. This became clear to Walter later, for, as far as he knew, he had never seen such a large ball. He didn't know that there was any other way to explain the location of countries except by means of maps. Thus he noticed in the room all sorts of things that he didn't understand till later.

When the maid opened the door of the room he heard the voices of the children, and also that of the father. He even heard laughter; but when he walked in all became as still as death. The two children at the table stood like soldiers. There was something so comical in their attitude that Walter could have laughed at them if he hadn't been so embarrassed. Even the

girl had a touch of official earnestness in her face more striking than he had seen it in older people, even at church. While the doctor was welcoming Walter and offering him a chair, the boy stood with hands clapped down on the seams of his trousers as if he expected someone to say, "Right about—face!" or, "Forward, column right, march!"

The larger boy in the corner had only looked up once, but with that peculiarly hostile expression which distinguishes man from other animals—to the disadvantage of the former. It is noticeable especially in children—sometimes in women.

"I'm glad to see you, my boy. It was nice of you to come. What have you there?"—then he turned to the little soldiers.

"Remind me afterward to tell you at dinner something about Olivier van Noort. William, you can think of it, can't you?"

Walter squinted at his Lady Macbeth, and was so embarrassed that he was helpless to present it to the doctor. The room was so magnificent; and the furnishings—the big cases full of books! His picture seemed so common and ugly that, if he could have done so, he would have swallowed it.

At home they had taught him how he must stand and sit and speak; and now he stood there, as awkward as a cow, stammering and stuttering. Making a supreme effort he managed to get it out that he had "come to thank the doctor" for his recovery—"but God first"!

The two soldiers bit their lips; and even the doctor found it difficult to keep a straight face.

“God first! Well said, my boy. Have you already thanked God?”

“Yes, M’nheer, every evening in bed, and yesterday at church.”

Little Sietske unable to control herself any longer had to laugh outright. Her laughter threatened to become contagious. William was busier than usual with his nose; Hermann had come to life and was eyeing Walter slyly.

“Order!” thundered the doctor, giving the table a rap with a ruler that made the globe tremble. Walter was frightened. “Order! This is a nice caper during study-hours.”

The clock began to strike. Sietske seemed to be counting, for at every stroke she raised a finger.

“I am going to——”

“Five!” she cried. “All my fingers—just look, five! Five o’clock, papa—Tyrant! Hurrah, hurrah!”

Both boys joined in the uproar. It was a quodlibet from “*Gaudeamus igitur*,” “*Vive la joie*,” and “God save the king.” Forward, all! *Vive la vacance!* *A bas les tyrans!* *Revenge!* \* \* \* \*

The children were determined to have their well earned romp; and they had it. Walter rubbed his eyes, and would not believe his ears. It was beyond his comprehension. \* \* \* \*

“That will do now,” said the doctor. “Come, mamma is waiting dinner—and you, too, my boy!”

William took Sietske on his back and Hermann mounted the father. Thus they descended the stairs, Walter bringing up the rear. Lady Macbeth had dis-

appeared, being now crumpled up in Walter's breast-pocket.

Walter was nonplussed. Was this the same man who used the gold pen?—whose coachman wore the furs?

How was it possible? Was it a dream, that he and all the family had looked on this man and simply been overcome by his dignity?

He couldn't understand it.

Again the atmosphere of the dining-room was quite different from that of the schoolroom, either before or directly after five.

"Present the young gentleman to your mamma," said the doctor, turning to William.

"May I do it?" asked Sietske.

Doctor Holsma nodded, and the little girl took Walter by the hand and conducted him to a lady who sat at the head of the table preparing the salad.

"Mamma, this is a young gentleman—oh, I must know your name. What is your name?"

"Walter Pieterse."

"This is Mr. Walter Pieterse, who has come to thank papa, because he—he was sick; and he—the young gentleman is going to stay for dinner, papa?"—the doctor nodded again—"and he's going to stay for dinner, mamma."

"With mamma's consent," said the father.

"Yes, with mamma's consent."

Mevrouw Holsma spoke to Walter kindly and offered him a chair. It was necessary, too.

Everything seemed so princely to Walter that he was glad to be seated. Three-fourths of his little figure



was hidden under the table. That was something gained. He was amazed at almost everything he saw and heard. He folded his hands.

“Do you want to say a grace, little man?” asked the doctor.

“Yes, M’nheer,” Walter stammered.

“A good custom. Do you always do that at the table?”

“Yes, always—at warm meals, M’nheer!”

Those children had been taught good manners. Nobody smiled.

Walter bowed his head for a moment; and the doctor took advantage of the opportunity to give the children a look of warning. They remembered; and, if afterwards Walter discovered that he had cut a singular figure in this household, they were not to blame.

“You do well to do it,” said Holsma. “We don’t do it; and perhaps we do well not to.”

“Certainly,” said the mother. “Everyone must act according to his own conviction.”

This simple statement moved Walter more than any of them could have imagined. He—a conviction! That short sentence of Mevrouw Holsma attributed to him a dignity and importance that was strange to him, and gave him a right he had never thought of before. Through the soup he was thinking continually: “I may have a conviction!”

It never occurred to him that a thing could be interpreted otherwise than it was interpreted for him by his mother or Stoffel, or some other grown-up person. The whole question of praying, or not praying, did not

appear so important to him as this new fact, that he could have a conviction. His heart swelled.

The doctor, who understood Walter, recalled him from his thoughts.

“Everyone must act according to his conviction; and in order to come to a conviction one has to reflect a long time over the matter. I am convinced that our little guest would like to eat some of those peas. Pass them to him, Sietske.”

Walter had grasped the import of Holsma's words, and also the meaning of this transition to the peas. Walter felt—without putting his feelings into words—that the pedantry of the schoolroom had been put aside at five o'clock, and that his host merely wanted to give him a friendly warning against dogmatic bigotry, without tainting the fresh, wholesome atmosphere of the dining-room.

Despite his shy, retiring nature—or, better, in connection with this characteristic—Walter was an extremely intelligent boy. This fact had escaped almost everybody he had come in contact with because of his lack of self-confidence, which prevented him from revealing his true self. He usually seemed to comprehend more slowly than others; but this was because he was less easily satisfied with the result of his thinking. His mind was exacting of knowledge. During Walter's sickness Holsma had remarked this peculiarity of the boy, and his interest had been enlisted at once.

Walter's shyness was due in a great measure to the manner in which he had been taught what little he knew. Everything his teachers taught him was looked

upon by them as something immutable and irrefutable. Twice two is four, Prince so-and-so is a hero, good children go to heaven, God is great, the Reform Church represents the true faith, etc., etc. It was never hinted to him that there was any room for doubt. Indeed, he was led to believe that his desire to know more about things was improper and even sinful.

After all those extraordinary occurrences in the study, Walter was prepared to expect almost anything in the way of the unusual, but that William and Hermann, and even little Sietske, were allowed to help their plates to whatever they wanted—that was more wonderful to him than the aërial voyage of Elias. With Geneviève in the famous wilderness—yes, even in Africa it couldn't be any more free and easy. He was continually surprised and taken off his guard by the unwonted and unexpected. In fact, his thoughts were so far away that when during dessert the little girl passed him a saucer of cream——

Ye gods, it happened and—I must tell it. Oh, if like the chroniclers of old, I might put the blame on some privy councilor, “who unfortunately advised,” etc.

But what privy councilor in the whole world could have advised Walter to let that porcelain spoon tilt over the edge of the saucer and fall into Sietske's lap! He did it, he!

Oh, how sad it was. He had just begun to pull himself up in his chair. Another moment and he would have actually been sitting. Perhaps he might have said something soon. The name of a certain country in Africa, which Sietske could not remember a mo-

ment before, had occurred to him. It was not that he might seem smarter than Sietske that he was going to speak out. No, it was only that he might seem a little less stupid than himself. But now—that miserable spoon!

Before he had time to wonder how his awkwardness would be received, Sietske was talking along smoothly about something else—just as if this little “catastrophe” was a matter of course.

“Papa, you were going to tell us something about Olivier van Noort.”

She arose, wiped off her little skirt and fetched Walter another spoon from the buffet.

“Yes, papa, Olivier van Noort! You promised it, papa.”

All urged him to tell the story. Even Mevrouw Holsma manifested great interest in it. Walter was aware that this conversation was intended to cover up his accident. He was moved; for he was not accustomed to anything like this. As Sietske took her seat again she noticed a tear creeping down across his cheek.

“Mamma, I got a silver spoon. That’s just as good, isn’t it? These porcelain things are so heavy and awkward. They’ve fallen out of my hand three times; and Hermann can’t manage them, either.”

The mother nodded to her.

“And how it is with Olivier van Noort?”

The door-bell rang, and almost immediately afterwards a gentleman entered the room who was greeted by the children as Uncle Sybrand.

The host now invited all to the garden and sent Hermann to the study for a book.

“You young rascal, don’t you go now and maliciously break that globe. It can’t help it.”

Then came the story of Admiral Olivier van Noort and the poor Vice-Admiral Jan Claesz van Ilpendam, who was put ashore in the Strait of Magellan for insubordination. It interested all, and called forth a lively discussion, in which the entire family as well as the guests took part.

## CHAPTER XXI

**T**O readers of a certain class of fiction it will no doubt seem strange if I say that Walter's visit to the Holsma family influenced greatly his spiritual development. Not immediately; but a seed had been planted which was to grow later. He saw now that after all independent thought was possible, even if he could not yet allow himself that luxury. The mere knowledge that there were other opinions in the world than those of his daily mentors was a long stride forward.

He was depressed on account of his lack of knowledge. Those children knew so much more than he did; and this made him sad.

They had spoken of someone who was startled to find footprints. Who was it? The child had never heard of Defoe's hermit. He asked Stoffel.

"Footprints? Footprints? Well, you must tell me what footprints you mean—whose footprints. You must give names when you ask questions."

"That's right," said the mother, "when you want to know anything you must mention names. And Mevrouw made the salad herself? Well, that's strange. The girl must have been out somewhere."

As to other "strange" things, which were not likely to meet the approbation of his family, Walter was silent. Not a word about that Saturnalia, or the omission of grace at a "warm meal"! Nor did he mention the

liberties that were allowed the children, or the freedom with which they joined in the conversation. Perhaps it was a superfluous precaution. That bearskin would have been excused for many shortcomings.

Juffrouw Pieterse asked repeatedly if he had been "respectable." Walter said he had, but without knowing exactly what she meant. That affair with the spoon—had it been respectable? He didn't care to have this question decided—at least by his mother. But it was nice of Sietske; and wouldn't he have done the same?

He learned that the day was approaching when he must return to school. More than ever he felt that this source of knowledge was insufficient for him; but opposition was not to be thought of. He was dissatisfied with himself, with everything.

"I shall never amount to anything," he sighed.

His Lady Macbeth seemed uglier to him than ever. He tore her up. And Ophelia?

Goodness! He hadn't thought of Femke the whole day. Was it because she was only a wash-girl, while the doctor's children were so aristocratic? Walter censured himself.

He took advantage of the first opportunity to pay his debt in that quarter. For he felt that it was a debt; and this consciousness gave him courage. Picture in hand, he passed the familiar fence this time and knocked boldly on the door. His heart was thumping terribly; but he must do it! In a moment he stood before Femke. The lady of his heart was quietly darn-ing stockings. It is hard on the writer; but this little detail was a matter of indifference to Walter.

"Oh!" she cried, extending her hand. "Mother, this is the young gentleman we saw that time—the little boy who was so sick. And how are you now? You look pale."

"Take a seat, little boy," said the mother. "Yes, you do look pale. Worms, of course."

"No, no, mother. The child has had nervous fever."

"All right—fever, then; but it could be from worms. Give him a cup, Femke. It won't hurt you to drink coffee; but if it were worms——"

Mrs. Claus's worms were more in Walter's way than the stockings.

"Where does your mother have her washing done?" she asked. "Not that I want to pump you—not at all. But if she isn't satisfied with her wash-woman—it sometimes happens, you understand. Everybody must look out for himself; and I just thought I'd mention it. Whenever there are any ink-spots Femke takes them out with oxalic acid; and it never makes any holes—yes, it did happen once, and we had to pay for a pair of cuffs. You can ask Femke."

The fact was, he wanted to ask Femke something else; and she knew it. The story of Aztalpa had left its marks on her mind. But she was hampered very much like Walter was at home. She couldn't say, "Mother, speak a bit more Peruvian!" So she simply asked what the roll was that he had in his hand.

Walter was confused, but he managed to stammer that it was a present for her. Femke said she would always take good care of the picture.

"Yes," said the mother, "and you must iron out



those creases. We iron, too, little boy, and we deliver the clothes ready to put on. Nobody can complain. You can tell your mother. And your collar—it isn't ironed nicely—and such bluing! Ask Femke. Femke, isn't the blue in stripes?"

His collar not ironed nicely? and blued in stripes? And the infallible Pietro had laundered it! Even here, were there differences in method and conception? And in this respect, too, was the Pieterse tradition not the only one that brought happiness?

Femke was on nettles. She studied Ophelia, wondering who she was, and tried to turn the conversation. At last something occurred to her. It was necessary for her to run some errand or other, and "the young gentleman" could "accompany" her a part of the way.

"As far as I'm concerned," said the mother.

The young couple retired, taking one of those ways which in the neighborhood of Amsterdam are simply called "the ways." That is all they are. Whoever walks there for pleasure must take a good stock of impressions with him, in order to escape tedium.

But Walter and Femke were not lacking in this respect. Walter had so much to tell Femke that he could scarcely hope to get through; and she, too, had thought of him more than she was willing to admit, and more than he had any idea of. She began by saying that she hadn't told her mother of her unfriendly reception by Walter's mother and sisters, because she didn't want her mother——

"Oh, Femke—and you thought I would come?"

"Yes." said Femke, hesitating, but still with a

readiness that delighted Walter. "Yes, of course I expected to see you again. And I had a mass said for your recovery."

"Really?" said Walter, who hardly knew what it meant. "You did that for me?"

"Yes, and I prayed, too. I should have been sad if you had died. For I believe you are a good boy."

"I ought to have come sooner; and I wanted to, but—Femke, I was afraid."

He related to her how he had been near her on Sunday. The girl attributed his timidity to his diffidence toward her mother.

"My mother is a good woman. She wouldn't hurt anybody, but—you understand. She doesn't mix with people much. I understand the world better, because, you see, I was a nurse for three weeks. I was only substituting; I was too young to be a real nurse. It was at a relation's of ours, where the girl was sick. You know we really come of a good family. But that makes no difference. Tell me, are you well and strong again?"

Walter told her now all about his sickness, and soon he came involuntarily to the thing that gave him most trouble, his defective knowledge.

"All the children know French; but at our school it isn't taught. It's impossible to be a great man without knowing French."

Walter had difficulty in explaining to her that he meant something other than the possession of three houses, though that might not be bad.

"I should like—you understand? I should like—yes—I should like—how shall I explain?"

The sovereignty of Africa was on the end of his tongue; but he didn't have the courage to put his dreams into words.

"You know, Femke, that we live here in Europe. Now, down there in the south, far away—I will draw it for you. We can sit down here and I will show you exactly what I mean."

He selected some small sticks suitable for making outlines on the ground, then he and Femke sat down on a low pile of boards. He proceeded to scratch up the sand for some distance around.

"That is Europe. The earth is round; that is, it consists of two halves, like a doughnut. You see, it looks like a pair of spectacles. With that half we are not concerned. That's America. You can put your feet on it if you want to. Here is where we live; there is England; and here is Africa. The people there are uncivilized. They can't read, and they don't wear many clothes. But when a traveler comes along they are very nice to him—the book says so. I'm going down there and teach all the people to read and give them clothes and see to it that there is no injustice done in the whole land. And then we will——"

"I, too?" asked Femke in amazement.

"Why, certainly! I wanted to ask you if you were willing to go with me. We will be man and wife, you understand; so when I get to be king you will be——"

"I? Queen?"

She laughed. Involuntarily she rose and trampled to pieces all the kingdoms that Walter had just laid at her feet.

"But—won't you be my wife?"

“ Oh, you boy! How did you get such nonsense into your head? You are still a child!”

“ Will you wait then till I’m grown up? Will you let me be your friend?”

“ Certainly! Only you mustn’t think of that nonsense—not that you may not go to Africa later. Why not? Many people go on journeys. Formerly there lived a carpenter near us, and he went to the Haarlem with his whole family. But—marrying!”

She laughed again. It pained Walter. The poor boy’s first proposal was turning out badly.

Suddenly Femke became serious.

“ I know that you are a good boy; and I think a great deal of you.”

“ And I!” cried Walter. “ Femke, I have thought of you all the time—when I was sick—in my fever—I don’t know what I thought of in my fever, but I think it must have been you. And I talked to the picture I painted for you as if it were you; and that picture answered like you and looked like you. I was Kusco and Telasco, and you were Aztalpa, the daughter of the sun. Tell me, Femke, may I be your friend?”

The girl reflected a moment; and in her pure, innocent heart she felt the desire to do good. Was that seventeen-year-old girl conscious of the influence that Walter’s childish soul exerted upon her? Scarcely. But she wanted to give him a less cruel answer.

“ Certainly, certainly you shall be my friend. But—but——”

She was hunting for some excuse that would not hurt him, and still let him see the difference in their ages. He had grown during his illness, to be sure,

but still—she could have carried him on her arm. And he had dreamed of rescuing her from a fire!

“My friend, yes. But then you must do everything that I require.”

“Everything, everything! Tell me quick what I can do for you.”

It was painful for the girl. She didn't know what she should require; but she was under the necessity of naming something. She had always heard that it was good for children to study hard. What if she should spur him on to do that?

“Listen, Walter. Just for fun I told my mother that you were the best in school.”

“I?” cried Walter abashed.

“Study hard and be the first in school inside the next three months,” said Femke to the conqueror of continents, unaware of the sarcasm that lay in her words. “Otherwise, you see, my mother might think I had made fun of you; and I don't want that to happen. If you will only do that——”

“I will do it, Femke!”

“Then you must go home and begin at once.”

Thus she sent him away. As she told him “Good-bye” she noticed all at once that he was too large for her to kiss. A few hours later, when Father Jansen was calling on her mother and incidentally saw Walter's painting, Walter suddenly became a child again. The priest had said that in Dutch Ophelia meant Flora, who was the patron-saint of roses and forget-me-nots.

“Oh, that picture is from a little boy, a very small boy. He's about ten years old—or nine. He's certainly not older than nine!”

"Girl, you are foolish!" cried the mother. "The boy is fifteen."

"Yes, that may be—but I just meant that he's still only a child."

She stuck Ophelia away in some hidden nook, and Mrs. Claus and Father Jansen never saw that new edition of the old flower-goddess again.

"Femke, I will do it!" Walter had said.

There was really reason to believe that he would learn faster now; but Pennewip's instruction would wear Femke's colors. Walter knew very well that in requiring this service she had had his own welfare in view; but this showed her interest in him, and was not so bad. How would it have looked, he thought, if, after all that had gone before, he had answered: "Everything except that!"

Of course he would have greatly preferred to serve his lady on some journey full of adventure. But one cannot select for one's self heroic deeds. In these days Hercules and St. George would have to put up with minature dragons.

At all events, Walter took hold of his work in earnest. He studied his "Ippel," his "Strabbe," his "National History" and even the "Gender of Nouns," and everything else necessary to the education of a good Netherlander. Poetry was included; and Walter's accomplishments along this line were such that other "Herculeses" might have envied him.

He had never read the stories of tournaments. No enchantress gave him a charmed coat of mail; no Minerva put the head of Medusa on his shield—no,

nothing of all that. But—Keesje, the butcher's boy, might look sharp for his laurels!

In justice to Walter it must be said that he gave his opponent fair warning, in true knightly style.

At the end of three months Walter was actually the first in his classes. Pennewip was compelled to take notice of it.

"It is strange," he remarked. "I might say that it is remarkable. Yes, in a way, it is unprecedented—without a parallel!"

At home the result was that a great council was held regarding Walter's future. He didn't want to become a compositor; and to be a sailor—that would have suited him, but his mother was opposed to it. Stoffel, too, objected on the ground that usually only young people who are worthless on land are sent to sea.

Thus Walter's plans for conquest were slipping away from him. He was not attracted by the brilliant careers that were proposed: They left Africa out of account. He didn't want to be a school-teacher, or a shoemaker, or a clerk, or a counter-jumper.

However, after all authorities had been heard, Stoffel came to the conclusion that Walter was peculiarly well fitted for "business." Juffrouw Pieterse agreed with him thoroughly.

## CHAPTER XXII

“**A** RESPONSIBLE business firm wants a young man (Dt. Ref.) of good family. He must be moral, well-behaved and not under fifteen years old. Prospect of salary if diligent and reliable. Good treatment guaranteed. Address written applications in own handwriting to ‘Business,’ care E. Maaskamp’s book and art store, Nieuwendyk, Amsterdam.”

The writer cannot recall what sort of art publications E. Maaskamp was dealing in just at that time, and will not make any guesses, for fear of getting the reader into chronological difficulties. If it should become necessary in writing Walter’s history, the writer would have no compunctions of conscience in putting the republic after Louis, or William I. before the republic.

And as for that “Dt. Ref.”—Dutch Reform—in the advertisement—that gives the writer no trouble. He knows very well that “Dt. Ref.” as a necessary qualification for servants, apprentices, etc., was introduced after E. Maaskamp’s pictures had been forgotten. Nevertheless, it must be insisted upon that the aforesaid abbreviation was in the advertisement which was now occupying the undivided attention of the Pieterses.



"There couldn't be anything more fortunate," said the mother. "What do you think, Stoffel?"

"Yes, mother, it couldn't be better."

"What pleases me especially is the 'well-behaved.'"

"Moral and well-behaved, mother."

"Yes, moral and well-behaved—do you hear, Walter? Just as I have always said. And 'prospect of salary.' What do you think of that, Stoffel?"

"Yes, mother; but—he must be 'diligent and reliable.'"

"Yes, Walter, you must be diligent and reliable. Haven't I always told you that? And they require 'Dt. Ref.'; but you are that, thank God."

"Yes, mother, he's that all right."

"Stoffel, don't you think you'd better write the letter?"

"But it says 'in own handwriting.'"

"That's so! But if you write the letter in your own handwriting—that will be better than for such a child to write it."

Stoffel had some difficulty in making it plain to his mother that "own handwriting" meant Walter's own handwriting; but she finally saw the point, and Walter was given a seat at the table.

"Well? What must I write at the top?"

"Now, have you forgotten that again? Such a simple thing? Have you got down the date? Then write 'Gentlemen,' in business style. It says, 'responsible business firm.'"

"Yes," said the mother, "and add that your father had a business, too. We sold shoes from Paris. Otherwise they will think we're only shoemakers."

“And write that you are the first in school.”

“And that you belong to the Dutch Reform Church.”

“And that you are moral and well-behaved.”

“And that you are diligent and reliable. Don't you see, you may get a salary then right away.”

At last the letter was ready. It only remained to stamp it and post it. But why couldn't the young applicant deliver the letter in person and save the postage? Stoffel thought there would be no impropriety in such a course. Even a responsible business firm ought to overlook such a detail.

With a heavy heart Walter started out on his important errand. He was entering the real world, and was about to become a worshiper of the great god of “business.” He was depressed by his lack of confidence, and felt that it was unbecoming in himself to make application to a “responsible business firm.”

If he met a man that looked well-to-do, he would ask himself if the gentleman was a “business man,” and belonged to a “responsible business firm.” This last high-sounding expression embodied mysteries which he did not attempt to understand. He would learn it all later.

Walter stammered an excuse to the young fellow in the shop for not having sent his letter by post. The fellow didn't understand him, but threw the letter carelessly into a box containing a few dozen others that were awaiting the favorable consideration of Messrs. Motto, Business & Co.

The fellow was busy with some Turkish battles in glaring colors, and declined to enter into any con-

versation with our hero. Walter's mouth watered for a bright picture of Grecian chivalry. But what good did it do? He had no money; and, besides, he was out for business, not for heroic deeds.

"Later!" he thought.

Arrived at home he received the usual scolding. His mother maintained that he had certainly not entered the shop in a "respectable" manner; otherwise the young gentleman would have given him a friendlier reception. She was afraid that those excellent gentlemen, Motto, Business & Co., would take this into consideration to his detriment.

"And you say there were already a whole lot of letters there? You see, Stoffel—if he only isn't too late! That's the way—those people would break their necks or be first. And who knows but what some of them are Roman Catholics? I wonder if they all think they're moral and well-behaved. You can just see what kind of people there are in the world!"

Walter had to go back to Maaskamp's and get the address of the firm in question. The idea was for him to call on the firm in person and thus get ahead of everybody else. Juffrouw Pieterse wanted to bet her ears that not a one of the other applicants could boast of a father who had sold Parisian shoes.

"Tell them that! Your father never took a stitch in his life. He didn't even know how to. It's only to prove that we had a business, too. He never had an awl in his hand—isn't it so, Stoffel?"

Those eminently respectable gentlemen, Motto, Business & Co., lived—I don't know where they lived; but they had founded on the Zeedyk a cigar store and

a circulating library. It was probably not far from the place where six or eight centuries earlier a few fishermen had founded the greatest commercial city of Europe.

Walter found one of those worthy gentlemen behind the counter. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and was engaged in weighing out some snuff for an old woman. "Business" was evidently being carried on.

As Walter had formed no conception of "responsible business firm," he was far from thinking that the gentlemen had claimed too much for themselves. With his peculiar timidity he even reproached himself for not having understood the conception "business" before.

Now he understood it. Business meant to stand behind a counter, in shirt-sleeves, and weigh snuff. And, too, on the Zeedyk.

The cigar store occupied only half the width of the house, and was connected with the circulating library by a side door. Motto, Business & Co. were simultaneously cultivating two industries: those who didn't care for snuff or tobacco could get something to read, and vice versa.

Over the shelves, on the tobacco side, were posted signs bearing the assurance that something was "manufactured" here. Differing entirely from the Pieterses, these gentlemen seemed to think that to make a thing meant more than merely to sell it. We leave the question undecided.

Was it true that this business firm manufactured anything? The only thing they manufactured was the paper bags that were to be pasted together by the

moral, well-behaved, diligent and reliable young man who was a member of the Dutch Reform Church.

The amount of business done was small, the profits barely paying the rent. The wicked world on the Zeedyk even said that the two blue porcelain vases bearing in old-fashioned letters the inscriptions "Rappee" and "Zinking," had been borrowed from a second-hand dealer in the neighborhood, and that the good man came by every day to look after his property.

The shop was small, and was closed off in the rear by a green curtain, which was calculated to make customers think there was something more beyond. To be exact, there *was* something beyond that curtain. There hung a dilapidated mirror, consoling with a lonely chair, which was now ornamented by the coat of the worthy senior partner; and leaning against the wall was a half-round table, on which a pomatum-pot was making fun of a comb because for years it had been expecting to grow new teeth. Business was not so exacting but that Mr. Motto could devote a little spare time to the improvement of his personal beauty. He had succeeded in developing two beautiful bunches of hair on the sides of his face. They cost him much pains and grease; but they were the delight of all the ladies who entered the shop.

"And so you want to go into business, do you?" asked Mr. Motto, after he had given the old woman a "pinch" from the jar. "What all have you studied? Reading, writing, arithmetic, French? Eh? And what are your parents."

"They dealt in shoes—from Paris, M'neer. But I

don't know French. Arithmetic—yes. Went through Strabbe.”

“And you know arithmetic, do you? How much then is a Pietje and a half?”

Walter stammered that he didn't know. Does the reader know?

“But you must know that if you expect to calculate. And you don't know what a Pietje is? Do you know the difference between a sesthalf and a shilling? And between a dollar and a twenty-eight piece? Look——”

Mr. Motto pulled out the cash-drawer and seemed to be hunting for a dollar; but for some reason or other he decided to make out with a sesthalf. This he laid on the counter and asked Walter to imagine a shilling lying beside it. He then proceeded to test Walter's knowledge of business by asking him to point out the differences between the two coins. Mr. Motto claimed that in business one must know these details thoroughly.

And Mr. Motto was right about it. At that time there were more different kinds of money in the Netherlands than there are in Germany now. To be able to distinguish the various coins readily and make change accurately a regular course of study was necessary. Just as a law was about to be passed to confer the title, “Doctor of Numismatics,” on examination, the secretary of the treasury discovered that all this trouble could be spared by simplifying the money. He became very unpopular after this.

In Walter's time, though, such a reform had not been thought of. The florin had twenty stivers; the regular Holland dollar had fifty stivers, the Zeeland

dollar had forty-two. The dollar was worth a florin and a half, and the gold florin was called a "twenty-eight," because it contained twenty-eight stivers. The coins were well-worn and seldom exhibited any traces of inscriptions, milling, etc. Matters were further complicated by three-florin pieces and ducats of sixty-three stivers, not to mention any other coins.

For Walter the money question was a serious one.

"And you don't know French, either?" in a tone that was scarcely encouraging.

"No——" mournfully.

"And would your parents put up cash security for you?"

Walter didn't understand the question.

"Caution. Don't you understand? Security! There's lots of money handled, and I must know who I'm turning the shop over to. And—do you know Danish?"

Mr. Motto did not always speak grammatically.

"No—M'neer."

"What! Nor Danish, either? But Danish sailors come in here to buy tobacco, and then you need to speak Danish. In a business like this here you must know all languages. That's the main thing—otherwise your cake's dough! I've even had Greeks to come in here."

Walter's heart gave a jump. What heroic deeds might they not do on such occasions!

"Yes, Greeks; but they were drunk and wanted a smoke for nothing. We don't do it that way. The main thing is to look out for the little things. Otherwise your cake's dough, you understand. Yes, in

business you must know all languages, otherwise you can't talk to the customers. That's the main thing. But that will be all right if your parents can deposit a caution. Sometimes there are at least ten florins in the cash-drawer, you know; and in business a man must have security. That's the main thing. Otherwise your cake's dough; you can see that for yourself."

"My father is dead," said Walter, as if that fact rendered the cash security unnecessary. He didn't know anything else to say.

"That so? Dead! Yes, it often happens. Dead? All right! But haven't you a mother who can pay for you?"

"I—will—ask—her," Walter stammered.

"Certainly. Ask her right away; for you know in business things are done in a hurry. Said, done! That's the main thing. Otherwise your cake's dough. Here is another shop, and you will have work to do in there, too—if your mother can put up the money. That's the main thing."

Mr. Motto conducted Walter into the circulating library. On three sides of the room were bookcases reaching to the rather low ceiling. For the rest, the place was provided with a ladder to be used in gathering such fruits of literature as hung out of reach. And then there was a big, thick book, in which the diligent and reliable young man of Protestant faith was to enroll the names of the people who paid a dubbeltje a week for a book. It's cheaper now.

"You see," said Mr. Motto, "that is the book, so to say the great book. You understand bookkeeping, don't you?"



Unfortunately Walter had to admit that he had not yet studied that branch.

“Nor bookkeeping, either? Boy! that’s the main thing in business. If a man can’t do that his cake’s dough. It’s very simple. You write down who takes out a book, with the day and date and street and number. And when they bring the book back you drawn a line through it; and you’ve got a pretty kettle of fish if you don’t do it. When you don’t know the people you must——”

“Ask for a deposit!” cried Walter quickly, rejoiced that he knew something. It’s doubtful if he knew what he was to draw the line through.

“Yes, a deposit. A florin a week for a volume. Then, you understand, when a volume’s gone, the cake’s dough with that volume. Later I will explain to you everything about the cigars and tobacco; but first I must know whether your mother—ask her right away! And now I’ve explained everything to you at least half a dozen times. For there’s no lack of boys that want to go into business; but when it comes to Moses and the Prophets—then they set the bow-sails. And that’s the main thing. Otherwise you look a little delicate, but I must know first if your mother can deposit a caution. *Adieu!*”

Walter went home in a peculiar frame of mind. At first the family did not think favorably of that “cash security.” Stoffel, however, had often heard of such things, and negotiations were opened with the said firm. It was finally agreed that a deposit of one hundred florins should be made, for which the firm agreed to pay  $3\frac{1}{2}\%$  interest. Juffrouw Pieterse was

not quite satisfied with this, as she was accustomed to getting 4 %; but "one must do something for one's children."

Stoffel, who represented the Pieterses in these negotiations, was surprised that he never got to see more than the first half of the firm—or, better, the first third. He even took the liberty of remarking on the peculiar circumstance, when he learned that the "Co." was merely ornamental, while "Business" existed only in Mr. Motto's imagination. In fact that handsome and worthy gentleman alone constituted the "responsible business firm," and like an Atlas carried on his broad shoulders all the responsibilities incident to such a complicated and extensive undertaking. It was quite natural that he should desire to put a part of the burden on the back of some diligent, reliable Protestant boy, who could furnish cash security. For that was "the main thing."

On the library side Walter developed a diligence against which only one thing could be urged: it was prejudicial to the tobacco industry adjoining. If he had smoked as much as he read, he would have made himself sick; and even his reading wasn't the best thing in the world for his health.

He devoured everything indiscriminately—whether ripe or green. Most of that literary fruit was green. In a short time he was able to foretell the fate of the hero with a certainty that would have piqued the author. The cleverest literary craftsman couldn't let the poor orphan boy be as poor as a church mouse for ten pages, but that Walter would see the flashing of the stars and knightly crucifixes with which he was

to be decked out on the last page. One might think this would cause him to lose interest in the book; but, no! He was constant to the end—to the official triumph. For him it would have been a sin to call to the Saxons and Normans a second too soon: “See if Ivanhoe isn’t going to smash that big-mouthed Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert!” And all the time he felt as if he were—Ivanhoe? No, as if he were the deity, who must give the hero strength to overcome that infamous scoundrel, Brian de Bois-Guilbert.

Then all at once the door-bell would ring, and the magnanimous Walter would have to occupy himself with things less chivalrous.

The only thing he could do in such moments was to weigh accurately, and not give anybody a cigar from the “tens” instead of from the “eights.” Such conscientiousness, however, was futile, for in the cigar-boxes were cigars that ought to have been called “twenties.” Mr. Motto said that the customers were usually drunk, and that it was all right to give them cabbage leaves to smoke. “You must size up your customer. That’s the main thing.”

This was something Walter never could learn. With him, ten was ten, eight eight—no matter who the customer was. To take an unfair advantage, or tell a lie never occurred to him. From fear or embarrassment he might possibly tell an untruth; but if he had been asked a second time——

As strange as it may seem, this aversion to lying and deception was nourished by the books he read. The brave knight fought till he was victorious, or dead. Only the fatally wounded surrendered. All

this had Walter's hearty endorsement: He would not have acted differently. The beautiful heroine was loved by everybody; and the rejected suitors died of despair, or joined some desperate band. All quite proper. The good remained steadfast, in spite of the Devil and all his machinations—yes, in spite of tedium. Once selected by the author to be a high-toned, moral hero—then spotless garments! Walter wondered if such a one could have a pain in the stomach, or suffer other inconvenience. Certainly not in books!

He did not know that such perfection was humbug. He was satisfied when the characters in such novels did what was required of them by the author. The villains were always betraying somebody; the heroes killed everything that got in their way; and the beautiful virgins charmed everybody. Even God, the God of romance, did his duty much better than—but that's another detail.

Yesterday on the Zeedyk a big boy had beaten a little fellow. That ought to happen in a book. How all the knights would have come running! Walter, too, was going to—but how could he help it if his employer called him back? “What in the devil have you got to do with that? Your work is here in the store. You attend to your own business now, and don't mix yourself in other people's brawls. That's the main thing!”

As a rule of conduct, this was not just what Walter was used to in his novels.

Despite such interruptions he continued his reading. He was almost ready to begin on the last section of

books, when he came to the store one morning and found everything locked up and under seal.

The worthy Mr. Motto, it seems, had gone to America, as a sailor; and doubtless that was the "main thing." The unfortunate owner of the two snuff-vases had a big law suit over them. The point was whether they were a part of the assets, or not.

On the Zeedyk at Amsterdam such processes must be tried according to Roman law; but as the Romans did not use snuff there is nothing said about "Rap-pee" in the Roman laws. The writer doesn't know how the matter finally turned out. It is to be hoped that everybody got what was coming to him.

Juffrouw Pieterse, however, did not recover her hundred florins; and, as usual, she groaned: "There's always trouble with this boy."

Walter couldn't help her. He had his own troubles: he had been cruelly interrupted in his reading. Of course the mysterious parentage of the young robber was perfectly clear to him; but still one likes to see whether one has guessed correctly, or not.

## CHAPTER XXIII

“**D**O you think stivers grow on my back?” asked the mother the next day. “You still don’t earn a doit! Do you have to buy tobacco for old soldiers?”

Walter had nothing to say. Recently his mother had given him a shilling to give to Holsma’s maid. Walter neglected to do this, and spent one stiver of the money on snuff for an old soldier.

The mother continued her tirade, making use of the word “prodigue,” prodigal.

“No, mother,” said Stoffel, “that isn’t it. He’s behind in everything. He doesn’t know yet how to handle money, that’s it!”

“Yes. He doesn’t know how to handle money! All the other children at his age—when they have a stiver they either save it or buy themselves something. And he—what does he do? He goes and gives it away! Boy, boy, will you never learn any sense?”

Walter was cut to the quick by the accusation of wastefulness and prodigality. In his eyes a prodigal was somebody, a man! “Prodigue, prodigue,” he murmured. He knew the word.

In one of the bedrooms hung a series of crude, highly colored pictures illustrating the story of the prodigal son. The pictures were French; and a study

of the titles convinced the family that "prodigue" could mean nothing but prodigal in the worst sense, *i. e.*, "lost." Stoffel had maintained this proposition against one of his colleagues, till that one drew a lexicon on him.

After much argument it was decided to compromise on the "mistake" in the French Bible by allowing "prodigue" to have sometimes the meaning of "extravagant." Those pictures had afforded Walter much food for thought.

*First picture:* The "lost" or prodigal son tells his father good-bye. The old gentleman wears a purple coat. Very pretty—but the prodigal himself! A mantle floated about his shoulders—it seemed to be windy in the colonnade. It was princely; and his turkish trousers were of pure gold. At his side was a bent sabre, and on his head a turban, with a stone in it—certainly onyx, or sardonox, or a pearl, or a precious stone—or whatever it might be!

The old gentleman seemed to be out of humor; but no wonder—all those loaded camels, and the slaves, and all the accessories for that long, long journey! A negro, as black as pitch, was holding a horse by the rein. Another negro was holding the stirrup, and seemed to say: "Off to the Devil; prodigal, get on!"

What boy wouldn't have been a prodigal son? The bent sabre alone was worth the sin.

*Second picture:* Hm—hm. Wicked, wicked! Why, certainly; but not for Walter, who in his innocence attached no importance to the extravagant dresses of the "Juffrouwen." It was sufficient that all were eating and drinking bountifully, and that they

were in good spirits and enjoying themselves. How prettily one of the girls, in glossy silk, was leaning over the shoulder of the "lost" one! How much nicer to be lost than found!—anyway, that was the impression the feast made on Walter. The true purpose of the picture—to deter people from a life of dissoluteness—escaped Walter entirely. Perhaps he knew what it meant; but in his heart he felt that it meant something else. What attracted him most was not the food and drink, under which the table "groaned," nor the sinful sensuality painted on the faces of the ladies. It was the freedom and unconventionality of the company that charmed him. In order to emphasize the idea of prodigality, the painter had allowed some big dogs to upset an open cask of wine.

The wine was streaming, and straying away as if it were the lost sinner. This pleased Walter immensely. None of the guests seemed to notice such a small trifle, not even the waiters. This ought to have happened just once in the Pieterse home—and even if it were only a stein of beer!

The artist says to himself, Do you suppose I didn't foresee the seductive influence of such a picture? The next one makes it all right!

Well, maybe so.

*Third picture:* Magnificent. How romantic this wilderness! Oh, to sit there on that boulder and stare into the immeasurable depths of the universe—alone!

To think, think, think!

No schoolmaster, no mother, brother, or anyone to



say what he must do with his heart, with his time, with his elbows, or with his breeches! That's the way Walter saw it. The young man there didn't even have on breeches; and he looked as if he wouldn't have been ashamed to stretch himself out on his back, with his arms over his head, and watch with wide-open eyes the passing of the moon and stars. Walter asked himself what he would think of when he had founded such an empire of solitude.

Hm! Femke could sit on the boulder with him. Prodigal son—oh, sin divine with her! He was surprised that in the whole Bible there was only one prodigal son. Of all sins this seemed to him the most seductive.

And the desert was so—endurable. There were trees in it, which one could climb, when one really got lost, or use to build a nice little cabin—for Femke, of course.

The prodigal in the picture didn't seem to have thought of all that. Why wasn't the Juffrouw in green silk with him? She will come soon, Walter said to himself. Perhaps she's not quite through with her prodigality. If she would only hurry up and come! He longs for her. But that is the only annoyance that a genuine prodigal takes with him from the profane world into that capital wilderness.

It must be remarked in passing, however, that the hogs with which that picture was equipped looked ugly. The pious artist had made them shield-bearers of sin, and had supplied their physiognomies with all kinds of horrible features. And, too, the trough looked dirty.

If it happens to me, said Walter, I'll take sheep with me; and Femke can card the wool.

The artist ought to admit that even this third picture is inadequate to inspire a proper disgust for prodigality.

And the fourth one? No better.

The old gentleman is excessively friendly. We are again in the colonnade, where the camels have just waited so patiently. One of the slaves clasps his hands and looks toward heaven—because he's glad, of course, that little Walter has come back.

He? The real Walter? Returned home, and friendly received in his high rank of a "has-been" and "recovered" prodigal? Oh, no!

And that fatted calf! In direct opposition to the custom that was familiar to Walter! It worried the boy. Juffrouw Pieterse never slaughtered anything. She ran a weekly account with Keesje's father; and even a roast was a rarity.

There was no prospect of a fatted calf, whether he became a prodigal or not. But that didn't keep the rank of a prodigal from being higher than that of a stupid boy who didn't know how to handle money.

He was encouraged to think that he was indebted to his friendly enemy, Juffrouw Laps, for something. She always cited the Bible, and spoke continually of feeding swine. Walter wanted to answer: "That's very nice, Juffrouw Laps, but can't it be sheep this time?"

He knew very well that she had never had any passion for carding, and consequently was not interested

in that blue muffler, which would be so becoming to Femke's favorite, sheep.

But she assured him that he was a prodigal; and that was enough.

"That's what I've always said!" replied Juffrouw Pieterse. "What does he do but squander his mother's money? If that man wants snuff, let him buy it. The king pays him. I have to work too hard for my money. Don't I, Stoffel?"

"Yes, mother; but it's only childishness in Walter!"

"Childishness! That's what I call it."

"No it isn't!" cried the pious Laps. "He's on the straight road to the trough of Luke 15. He will eat husks! Do you think the Master doesn't carry out his parables? Just send him to me. The pastors are to blame for it. They don't explain the Bible. Send him to me."

"If I only knew how he gets such things into his head!"

"You don't know? It's arrogance!"

She spoke the truth.

"Arrogance, Arrogance pure and simple—just as it was in Belshazzar, or Sennacherib, or Nebuchadnezzar."

How thankful Walter was! If at this moment he had had a letter to write—preferably to Femke—he would have boasted of being as wicked as three old kings put together.

"Arrogance!" repeated Juffrouw Laps. "Gold on top, iron in the middle, and feet of clay. The Master will overthrow him. Send him to me."

This invitation to turn over the royal villain to her for religious instruction was repeated so often that it was necessary to give her an answer.

“But, dear Juffrouw, the boy don’t want to. He’s stubborn; and what can one do with such a child?”

Walter knew that his mother was not quite truthful; but, after his former experience with his friendly enemy, he found it desirable to keep quiet. When pressed, however, for an explanation he said:

“The man wanted snuff, and nobody would give him any; so I——”

Juffrouw Laps knew enough. Walter was as good as her prisoner: she now knew exactly how to take his fortifications, if they could be taken at all.

“If he doesn’t want to come to me, don’t compel him,” she said sweetly on leaving. “To force him won’t do any good. Let him exercise his own pleasure. I’m afraid you pick at the child too much, anyway. What an awful fuss we’ve made over a stiver!”

“That’s what I say, too,” replied the mother. “It looks as if we begrudged him the money! We could have spared another stiver, and we wouldn’t have missed it, would we, Stoffel?”

“Yes, mother, but it’s time for Walter——”

“Goodness, what a hullabaloo to raise about a few pinches of snuff! The Master will repay it seven times seventy times. Whatever ye have done to the least of my brothers——”

With this consoling passage on her lips she took her leave of the astonished family.

Yes, it wasn’t so easy to see through Juffrouw Laps!

## CHAPTER XXIV

**I**N his efforts to reconcile the various conflicting authorities contesting for supremacy in his soul, Walter threw himself into a severe spell of blues.

He was not conscious of the contrast between the world of his high-flown fancy and the earthy environment of his home-life. The sympathetic care which he should have received after his illness had not fallen to his lot.

He felt dejected.

"Femke!" he thought; and he longed for her fresh healthy face, for her pure, unselfish glance, for her friendly smile. The Fancy that had led him away to the stars in search of his misty sister had got lodged on that girl of the Amsterdam lowlands, Femke—with her unpoetical length, breadth, thickness, and weight.

"I am going to see her," he cried. "I will! And if Mrs. Claus asks me about worms a dozen times, it's all the same to me; I am going to see her!"

Walter reached the house and knocked. "Come in!" someone called. This was a little sudden, for it took some time to get hold of the latch. But Walter did it. Perhaps he was thinking of Missolonghi.

The Turks that he saw now were not revolting in appearance. They were unarmed and did not murder a single baby.

But—Femke was not in the party.

Mrs. Claus was at the wash-tub, while Father Jansen was quietly smoking.

“Is that you, young man? Very nice! That’s the young man who gave Femke the picture, you remember, father?”

The father nodded to him kindly and smoked away, without manifesting any special Godliness.

“Yes, Juffrouw, I wanted to——”

“Very nice of you! Won’t you have a slice of bread and butter? And how is your mother? Is she better now? She was sick, wasn’t she? That’s a good boy, father. Femke said so. Is your mother better again? It was fever, wasn’t it? or apoplexy—or what was it then?”

“Oh, no! Juffrouw.”

“You mustn’t call me Juffrouw. I am only a wash-woman. Everyone must stay in his own class, mustn’t he, father? Well, it’s all the better; I thought she had been sick. It must have been somebody else. One has so much to think of. Do you like cheese?”

The good woman prepared a slice of bread and butter, with cheese. If Trudie could have seen it, she would have fainted. In the “citizen’s class,” such and such a sub-class, according to Pennewip, is found a certain scantiness that does not obtain in the common laboring class. In the matter of eating, laborers, who do not invest their money in Geneva, are not troubled so much by “good form” as people who give their children French names.

Walter had never seen such a slice of bread. He didn’t know whether he ought to bite through the

width, or the thickness. The bit of cheese gave him his cue.

He liked Mrs. Claus much better this time. And Father Jansen, too; even if he wasn't like Walter had imagined him to be.

He had never conceived a preacher as being anything else but a very supernatural and spiritual and celestial sort of person. Father Jansen didn't seem to be that kind of a man at all.

He visited the sheep of his fold, especially the plain people, not to make a display of beneficence—for he had nothing, but because he was happiest among simple people. He was fond of bread and butter of the Mrs. Claus variety. For the rest, he said mass, preached about sin, catechised, confirmed, absolved, and did whatever needed to be done. He performed the functions of his office, and did not think it at all strange that he should have gone into the church, while his brother in Nordbrabant succeeded to the business of his father, who was a farrier and inn-keeper.

“And what are you going to be?” he asked Walter; “for everybody in the world must be something. Wouldn't you like to be a bookbinder? That's a good trade.”

“I was—I was in business, M'neer; and I'm going back to business.”

“That's good, my boy. You may get rich. Especially here in Amsterdam; for Amsterdam is a commercial city.”

Walter wanted to add: “The greatest commercial city of Europe.” But he was abashed by the—world-

liness of Father Jansen's talk. He didn't find it disagreeable: he was merely surprised at it.

"A boy like you ought to eat a lot. You look pale. My brother can bend a horseshoe. What do you say to that? Have you ever eaten our Brabant bread? Ham isn't bad, either. A person that doesn't eat enough gets weak. I always eat two slices of bread and butter whenever I'm here at Mrs. Claus's; but I'm not nearly so strong\*as my brother. You ought to see the Vucht fair. That's a great time."

Walter was more than surprised to hear such talk from a preacher: he was almost pleased. He had never received such charming messages from heaven. Of course they came from heaven, those friendly words uttered in Brabant dialect between the puffs of Father Jansen's pipe. This man in a priest's coat chattered away as if there were no such thing in the world as God, Grace, and Hell—especially the latter. He was as happy as a child in telling about the strength of his brother, the horseshoer. It was his business to lead the world to eternal happiness; and he liked thick slices of bread and butter with cheese.

Walter had never had religious things opened up to him so delightfully. He felt encouraged to speak:

"M'neer, I would like to know who God is!"

Father Jansen started, and looked at Walter as if he hadn't clearly understood the question.

"Yes—that's very praiseworthy in you. You must——"

"But, father," cried Mrs. Claus, "the child isn't in the church! Are you?"—to Walter.

"Yes, Juffrouw, I have been confirmed,"



"To be sure, to be sure, but——"

"On the Noordermarkt!"

"Well, you see he's in the church all right."

The good woman didn't have the heart—or else she had too much heart—to tell the father that it wasn't the right church.

"Whoever wants to get acquainted with God," said Father Jansen, "must study diligently."

"To be sure," said Mrs. Claus, "the articles of faith. You ought to hear my Femke repeat them. It's a pleasure, isn't it, father? She's my only child, but—she's a girl worth having!"

"Yes, Femke is an excellent girl. I don't have any trouble with her."

The father spoke in a business-like manner; and he meant it that way. The spots on Femke's soul were easily removed. He praised Femke as a cook would praise a kitchen-pot.

Father Jansen had still more praise for Femke: she had patched his drawers so nicely.

Oh, Fancy!

The mention of this fact did not touch Walter's æsthetic feelings. With him there were other considerations. Fancy was used to seeing everything nude—fathers, humanity—so there was no difficulty here.

Walter was sixteen years old, already a little man—why must Femke patch drawers for this father!

"Yes," said the mother. "Femke is clever at patching. If you've got anything else that needs mending, just send it over."

Walter was warm. If it had been collars, socks,

waistcoats, or—well, if it had to be something questionable—if it had only been trousers!

“Just send it over, and if Femke isn’t here——”

“Where is she going to be?” thought Walter.

“Then I will attend to it myself. I can do it neatly.”

Thank God! Dear, good, magnificent Mrs. Claus! Do it, do it yourself, and leave Femke where she is.

But—where was she?

Thus Walter’s thoughts; but what did he say?—the hypocrite, the budding man.

“Yes, indeed, Mrs. Claus, I had almost forgotten to ask where your daughter Femke is.”

“Femke? She’s at my niece’s, where the girl is sick. You know we’re of good family. Femke is looking after my niece’s children.”

Walter didn’t have the courage to ask where this niece lived, so he assumed a look of contentment.

After much waiting and twisting and turning on his chair, Walter finally left the house with Father Jansen. He had not yet learned how to end a visit: some people never learn it.

“Don’t you want to do me a favor?” said the good man. “Then walk on my right side. I’m deaf here” —pointing to his left ear.

“I will tell you how it happened. When I was a little boy—are you a good climber?”

“No, M’neer!”

“Well, I am! In the whole of Vucht there wasn’t a boy who could climb as well as I could. Do you know what I did once? I climbed up and slipped a flower-pot from a third-story window. And—my

priest wasn't in a good humor at all! He didn't want to accept me till I had returned that flower-pot; and then I had to go and beg the old woman's pardon. And she herself went to the priest to intercede for me. Then he accepted me. But I got twenty 'con-fiteors'—oh, he was severe!

"But I was going to tell you why I'm deaf in the left ear.

"In one of the seminaries was a student—he's a canonicus in the Rhine country, and will get to be a cardinal, perhaps pope, for—he was very sly! I will tell you, his name was—Rake; but, you understand, his name was really something else. This Rake was a mean rascal; but he was never punished, because he was careful. See if he doesn't get to be a cardinal, or pope! You ought to hear him quote from the Vulgate. He could rattle away for three hours and never made a mistake." \* \* \*

"Are you perfectly crazy, boy, or what is the matter with you? Walking with a priest! What in the name of the Lord are you thinking about? Go in the house—quick! Jesu, what troubles I have with that child!"

With these words Juffrouw Pieterse broke off Walter's acquaintance with Father Jansen for this time.

The way that the father and Walter had taken led them directly by Walter's home. Juffrouw Pieterse, who was haggling with a Jew over the price of a basket of potatoes, narrowly escaped a stroke of apoplexy when she saw them together.

"With a priest!—Stoffel! Come down quick—that boy is walking with a priest!"

Tears rose in Walter's eyes. He had found Father Jansen a good man, and was grieved that that gentleman should meet with such a reception.

It is to be hoped that those rude words were received by his left ear. In fact, this seemed to be the case, for when Walter said that he was at home now and that his mother was calling him, Father Jansen answered kindly:

"So? You live there? Then I will tell you the next time why I am so deaf in my left ear—entirely deaf, you understand!"

Thank God, Walter thought, and wiped away his tears. In his eyes his mother had committed a sin so grave that about fifty "confiteors" would be necessary for its expiation.

"Oh, yes. I was going to tell you——"

With these words Father Jansen turned around again. He continued: "The flower-pot of the old lady, Juffrouw Dungelaar, you know—it wasn't for the flowers, you understand, nor for the pot, but only because I could climb so well. Otherwise—one mustn't take anything away, even if it is so high up. *Adieu*, young man!"

After giving Juffrouw Pieterse a friendly greeting that she did not deserve, the man continued on his way.

Stoffel said that to walk with a priest was "simply preposterous."

"As if he were crazy!" said Juffrouw Pieterse.

"Yes," agreed Stoffel, "but it's because he has nothing to do but loaf around. If that keeps up, he will never amount to anything."

True, Walter was loafing around; but he was not idle. His activities brought nothing palpable to light, still he was building up the inner life in a manner of which Stoffel had no idea.

"Of course!" said the mother. "He must have work. If he were only willing to be a compositor! or an apprentice in the shoe-business. To make shoes—that he shall never do."

"This running with priests comes only from idleness, mother. Do I run with priests? Never. Why not? Because I have to go to my school every day!"

"Yes, Stoffel, you go to your school every day."

"Besides, there are good priests. There was Luther, for instance. He was a sort of priest. What did he do?"

"Yes, I know. He reformed the people."

"He made them Lutherans, mother; but that's almost the same thing. One mustn't be narrow-minded."

"That's what I say, Stoffel, people ought not to be so narrow-minded. What difference does it make what a person's religion is, just so he's upright, and not a Roman Catholic!"

When Walter told Father Jansen that he "was in business," and that he was "going back to business," he spoke better than he himself knew. He did go back to business.

Through a leather-dealer, who, speaking commercially, was in close touch with shoes that came from Paris, Walter got a position with a firm whose "responsibility" was somewhat less apocryphal than that of Messrs. Motto, Business & Co. He was to begin his new apprenticeship in the offices of Messrs.

Ouwetyd & Kopperlith, a firm of world-wide reputation.

However, before he was to enter upon his new duties, all sorts of things were destined to happen, with the tendency to make Walter appear as a "hero of romance," which he wasn't at all.

## CHAPTER XXV

IT was Thursday. Stoffel came home with the important news that the king—I don't know what king—had arrived in the city unexpectedly and would visit the theatre that evening. Everything and everybody was in a commotion; for in republican countries much importance is given to pomp and title.

This time curiosity was more wrought up than usual. Many foreign princes, including an emperor, were visiting the king; and these distinguished personages would follow the court to Amsterdam, coming from The Hague, Utrecht and Haarlem. To put it tamely, it was to be a great occasion.

That republican populace was to get to see the countenance and coat-tails not only of their tyrant, but also the countenances and coat-tails of many other tyrants, not to mention female tyrants.

The old doughnut women on the "Dam," which the city rented to them as a market-place, were threatening to bring suit against the city. They felt that it was hard to have to pay rent for the fresh air, day after day, with the prospect of selling a few doughnuts to the youth of the street, and now be run out because his majesty wanted to exhibit himself to the people from the balcony of the old City Hall.

Why shouldn't the old women be seen at their accustomed places? Must the doughnut industry be carried on secretly? Was it for fear of imitations and

unprincipally competition? Or was it to keep the old women from seeing the king?

At any rate, the whole kit of them had to leave. At most, they could only mix with the crowd incognito, and afterwards might join in the prearranged "Long live the King!" or somebody else, as the case might be.

It is really remarkable that princes die. Seemingly the "vivats" are of no avail.

The crowd was especially large, on account of the many majesties and highnesses who had gathered about the tyrant.

Among the number was the Prince of Caramania, who had especial claims upon the sympathy of the people, so all the newspapers said. One of his ancestors had been a captain in the service of the state and had, therefore, spilt his blood for the freedom of the Netherlands.

This blood, and perhaps the freedom as well, was newspaper arabesque. It was certain, however, that the prince wore a green coat with gold frogs; and upon his head he had a big plume. It was, therefore, quite proper for the crowd to cry occasionally "Long live the Prince of Caramania!"

Among the eminent gentlemen was a certain duke, who, by reason of his virtues, had got himself banished from his country. The man was thrifty and economical, though without neglecting himself. Nevertheless, the rabble had dethroned him and sent him across the border with a bushel of diamonds. Of these diamonds he was now to display a few dozen in the shape of coat-buttons and the like. The newspapers



gave the crowd their cue accordingly. They were to cry: "Long live the Duke with his diamonds!"

Princess Erika was the niece of the king, and was to marry the crown-prince of a great empire, which was indebted to the Netherlands for its prominence. The newspapers gave the assurance that this empire would pay off the national debt of the Netherlands if the people would only put enough enthusiasm into a "Long live Princess Erika!"

The old Countess-palatine of Aetolia was descended directly from a certain knight who treated his hostlers like princes. In this case it was not inappropriate for a republican populace to ask for a prolongation of her ladyship's life. The cry was: "Long live the Countess-palatine of Aetolia!"

The Grand-duke of Ysland was the handsome grandson of a shopman. His merits would fill three columns of fine print. The man was a master of the type-case himself, and by exerting himself could even set up his own name. The newspapers said that having safely passed an ocean of pitfalls, he had now perfected himself as the brother-in-law of a demi-god. Therefore, whoever had the interest of his country at heart could not afford to fail to bellow at the top of his voice: "Long live the Grand-duke of Ysland!"

There were still more potentates and ladies of quality who had honored Amsterdam with a visit. They had heard that the city was *la Vénise du Nord*, that it was *tres interessant, tres interessant!* etc.

And the Holland herrings! *Délicieux!* Unfortunately the Netherlanders didn't know how to cook them; they must be baked.

And the Holland school of painting! *Rambrànn*—*magnifique!*

There were still other good things in Holland, as their highnesses testified with patronizing kindness.

“ Il parait qu’un certain Wondèle a écrit des choses, des choses—mais des choses—passablement bien!”

And the dikes! And the Katwyk sluice—*gigantesque!*

Whatever spare time they might have after making cheese and cooking herrings, the Holland people liked to devote to fighting the elements. After skating and racing this was the favorite recreation of the nation.

I can assure the reader that the aristocratic party took their departure thoroughly satisfied with our country. The only person who received quite a different impression—but I will not anticipate the feelings of our hero. Even a writer has his duties.

The first evening everything was to be illuminated. Two hundred and fifty thousand candles were to proclaim the enthusiasm of the people. Two hundred and fifty thousand fiery tongues were to cry: “Hosanna! Blessed be he who comes in the name of——” In whose name? Hosanna for whom? For what?

Well, that was a matter of indifference to the people. They knew that there was something doing, that there was a crowd, and that was enough. People are somewhat like children, who amuse themselves immensely in the confusion of a “moving,” of a

death, or of anything that causes commotion and excitement.

Walter had got permission to see the illumination. Unconsciously he assumed that stupid expression which is obligatory on such occasions. He listened to the conversation of those about him.

"That's what I call illuminating! Nine candles for such a big house!"

"Twelve!" cried another.

"No, nine."

"Twelve!"

"Nine!"

"Three—three—three—and three. Look there are twelve, or I can't count."

"No, the three above don't count. That story is rented. I know it."

"Well—if you mean it that way. I only said that four times three are twelve. What do you say, Hannes?"

Hannes found the calculation correct.

"How long will the candles burn?"

"Till about one o'clock, I suppose."

"I don't believe it!"

"Well, I do!"

"But I don't!—"

"Have you been in the Sukkelgracht?"

"Oh, it isn't pretty there."

"You think so? Prettier than here."

"Oh, no!"

"Yes, it is!—"

"Look there; there's a verse."

"Yes, a verse. Can you read it?"

"Certainly! Let me see, what is it?"

"I can read it, too."

"It's about 'illustrious blood'——"

"Yes, and 'our country,' and 'dedicated to honor and virtue.'"

"And 'his illustrious blood'——"

"No, there it stands—'torn from the barbarians'——"

"That comes later. 'Illustrious blood'——"

"Of Holland's hero——"

"Welcome, hero!"

"I wonder if the king looks at the candles. Do you suppose he reads such verses and copies them?"

"Oh, he has his ministers for that."

"Or generals. He has seen or read about lots of nice things."

"As nice as here?"

"Why, of course!"

"I don't believe it."

"Well, I do."

"Do you know what I think? He likes to look at the lights too."

"You think so?"

"Yes."

"No, you don't believe that."

"Don't crowd so!"

"I can't help it. They're crowding me."

"The people are pushing and shoving as if they were crazy."

"Did you ever see the like? You know what I think? Kalver Street ought to be as wide again as it is."

“ Yes, as wide again. The street’s too narrow.”

“ That’s why everybody’s scrouding so.”

There was much truth in this. Pressure was high. People were mashed and squeezed together. Those who, by reason of a lack of avoirdupois, were less firmly attached to the ground, were lifted bodily. Walter hung suspended in mid-air and looked over the heads of men much taller than he.

“ Are you walking on stilts?” asked a big fat woman, whose hips had come into collision with Walter’s knees. “ Well, that’s something.”

The pressure was increasing. It seemed that the fat woman would soon have Walter on her shoulder, like a gun; while Walter was thinking that soon he would be roaming over the country like a knight. No one was looking at the candles now. People were finding their amusement in crowding and being crowded.

No, Kalver Street ought not to be widened. For, properly understood, this crowding and pushing and shoving was the nicest part of the whole business.

How tedious it would have been quietly to watch those two hundred and fifty thousand candles from some comfortable position.

Our little man lay on the heads and shoulders of his brothers. Like some aspirants to a throne, he threw himself upon the masses. But he was beginning to feel generally uncomfortable. He wanted to hold on fast to something, or somebody—to somebody’s ears, or nose. That, however, did not suit the masses. They didn’t mind being squeezed; but they didn’t like to be held on to,

Crash!

Don't let the reader be alarmed. Walter had not burst under the strain; but the pressure of the crowd had broken in the double doors of a café! The irruption was terrible. The way the crowd streamed in might be compared to the flow of molten lava. Walter described a parabolic curve and landed on a table, without suffering any damage.

"Walter Pieterse!" cried the astonished party sitting around the table.

"Have you hurt yourself, Walter?"

No, he hadn't hurt himself; but he was rigid with surprise. Firstly, over his ascent; secondly, over his aerial journey; then over his descent among all kinds of glassware; and, finally—and that was not the least surprising thing—he was surprised to find himself all at once in the bosom of the Holsma family.

It was Sietske who asked him if he was hurt.

All the glasses, both great and small, were broken; but Walter was still in one piece. Uncle Sybrand helped him to his feet. It wasn't easy, for the press was great. However, Walter's size facilitated matters.

The proprietor couldn't reach the scene of action, but he was able to make his voice heard to the effect that everything broken must be paid for. From other tables came the noise of more breaking glass. The man was desperate. He cursed kings and masses indiscriminately.

"One bottle of wine, three lemonades, six glasses!" cried Holsma, assuming the responsibility for Walter's unintentional work of destruction.

Uncle Sybrand was holding up the money to pay for everything.

"Oh, M'neer, I'm afraid to go home after this," cried Walter. "How can I pay for that? And my mother——"

In the noise and jumble Holsma did not understand; but Sietske understood.

"Sh!" she whispered. "Papa will pay for it all. Besides, I have money; and William, too; and Hermann. Just be quiet."

Walter still did not understand. When, under the protection of the Holsmas, he was safe on the outside again, and the entire party had escaped the mob by taking a side street, he reiterated that he did dare show his face to his mother and Stoffel.

"It doesn't make any difference about the money," said Holsma. "I will attend to that. Why, boy, you're scared half to death. You're shaking. Come along home with us where you can rest a bit and quiet yourself."

The distance, however, proved too short to have the desired quieting effect on Walter.

"My mother will be angry when I come home late."

Holsma told him that a messenger should be sent to his mother at once, so that she would know where he was.

The doctor gave him a sedative and led him into a room adjoining that in which the Holsma family were sitting. Walter was to walk up and down the room till he felt better; but he soon got tired of this and did the very thing that he was not to do; he sat down on a sofa and fell asleep.

Whether, in general, it is a good thing to keep in motion after a fright—that I do not know. Walter, on the contrary, always felt the need of sleep under such circumstances; and this remedy, with which nature provided him, usually restored his mental equilibrium. Perhaps, after all, it wasn't real sleep: he merely dreamed.

Again he was lifted up, higher and higher, borne by strong hands. A man bit him in the hand. The fact was he had scratched his hand on a refractory horsehair, which had become tired of acting as stuffing for a sofa-pillow.

An angry woman assailed him with abuse. Stupid? Not stupid? We, the masses? She let him fall. But he fell in Sietske's lap; and there wasn't a single sliver of glassware.

He was happy—but the horsehair scratched him again. Then he heard a voice. Was he still dreaming? Yes, dreaming again of soaring and falling. There was Femke.

Of course there had to be something about her in his dream, and about bleaching the clothes. Father Jansen was there, too, exhibiting to the stars the particular garment that Femke had patched. Orion and the Great Bear admired this specimen of her handiwork. Walter did not.

"Did you do it yourself?" he heard Sietska asking in the next room. "Or couldn't you get through the crowd?"

"No, it was impossible to get through such a mob. I turned it over to the man with the peddler's wagon."



What was that? Walter sat up. Father Jansen was gone; Orion, too; and the clouds, and the "masses"; but—that voice!

He heard it again.

"I know him very well—oh, so well! He's a good boy." This he heard Femke say!

He jumped up and ran into the room where the Holsmas were. He saw a triangular piece of a woman's dress disappear through the door; then the door closed.

He didn't have the courage—or was something else beside courage necessary to ask, "Is that Femke?"

On his way home that evening Walter did not suffer in the least from the sensation of being borne through the air; or from anything similar. He was on the earth, very much on the earth. He felt lowly.

If he had only seen that bit of Femke's dress somewhere else, and not at the Holsmas—not in that swell family; not in the company of Sietske, who had so much money in her "savings-bank," nor in the presence of the vain William, who was studying Latin!

He was brave enough to feel ashamed of himself; and that's all I can say in his favor.

Let us now look at things from the point of view of Juffrouw Pieterse. That lady was in the clouds. She was hoping that the messenger who had brought her news of Walter had not been able to find her flat at once. The idea of someone from Dr. Holsma's asking for her through the neighborhood was decidedly pleasant. The longer he might have had to inquire for her the better!

"Of course he was at the grocer's," she said.

“Such messengers never know where they have to go. Of course he told that the ‘young gentleman’ was staying at Dr. Holsma’s! And such a man always tattles; such people don’t do anything but tattle. But, as far as I’m concerned, everybody can know it. I only mean that such people like to tattle. But—say, Walter, how did it happen that you went with the family? You’re a nice rascal. Stoffel, what do you say?”

Stoffel made a serious face—as much as to say: “Hm! I’ll have to think over it. He’s been up to something.”

“I met the Holsma family in Kalver Street,” Walter said. He told the truth; he had met the family in Kalver Street. But why didn’t he tell anything about the extraordinary circumstances under which he met them? Ah—there’s the rub!

“Your back is so sticky!” complained Pietro, whose care it was to look after the washing.

The family rubbed, and felt, and smelt; and then they declared unanimously that Walter’s back had been guilty of absorbing all kinds of sticky gases and liquids.

“Really, it smells like lemon,” said Trudie.

“And like wine!”

“And it’s just coated with sugar. Boy, where have you been? Don’t you have any sense of shame? To go to visit such swell people with lemon and sugar on your back! It’s a disgrace, a disgrace.”

“There was such a crowd on the street.”

“That don’t explain the wine on your back—nor the lemon—nor the sugar. What say you, Trudie?”

There was complete unanimity. Timid, as usual, Walter didn't have the courage to tell everything. Nor would this have done any good. The understanding of the Pieterse family was like a rusty lock that no key will open. Walter knew this, and remembering former sad experiences, allowed the storm to rage above his head. Unfortunately he, too, in a sense, was rusty. His nobility of character had suffered; he had been guilty of cowardice.

He felt it. No minister could pray it away. Not even God himself could revoke it. Everyone must act according to his conviction, Mevrouw Holsma had said. He had not done this.

A dog would have kissed the hem of Femke's garment, meeting her after such a long separation. For it was she. Certainly it was Femke—or——

Oh, he was hunting for or's!

Could it have been somebody else? It must have been somebody else. How could Femke be at Dr. Holsma's?

No, no, it was she! Didn't she say that she knew me? Didn't she speak with the same voice that I heard when she called me a dear boy and gave me the kiss at the bridge?

She didn't know then what a coward I am! She wouldn't deny me and betray me. She would say to everybody: That is Walter, my little friend that I kissed that time, because he was so brave in fighting off those boys!

And I? Oh, help me God!

No, God has nothing to do with it. I am a coward. I can't live this way.

He thought of suicide; and in this mood he spent that Thursday night. He arose Friday morning with the firm determination to put an end to his unworthy existence.

Fortunately, just after breakfast he was put to work on a job that is calculated to reconcile one with life.

He had been tried and convicted, the verdict being unanimous. The penalty was that he should wash his jacket till it was clean. He entered upon the task with such enthusiasm that in an hour he was running to his mother crying triumphantly:

“Look, mother! You can’t see a trace of it now!”

This little conquest dispelled all the clouds that had darkened his life.

There are plenty of people who would gladly fall into a barrel of lemonade if they only understood the salutary effects of cleaning a coat.

The poor unfortunate who has never washed his own clothes does not know what life is.

I will ask her pardon, thought Walter; and he pictured it all to himself, wondering whether it would do for him to fall at her feet at Holsma’s, in the presence of the one who had delivered the message. Finally, however, he quieted himself with the thought that Femke would probably not be at the doctor’s very long. He hoped to be able then to settle the matter quietly, when only the two concerned were present. This was not courageous, to be sure; but his punishment was already on the way.

## CHAPTER XXVI

THE events of an eventful Friday were at an end, as it seemed; and Walter prepared to climb into the narrow bedstead, which he shared with his brother Laurens. He was now in a tranquil frame of mind. He didn't even have any desire to romp with Laurens, who, without laying claim to geometrical knowledge, usually managed to find the diagonal of the bed.

It was Walter's intention to think over recent events again. He wished to busy himself with others; he was tired of himself—at least he thought so for a moment.

There was a prince, who distributed money among the people. Oh, if I were only a prince!

That wasn't a bad thought. Under the same circumstances, most people would have thought: Oh, if I could only have got some of the money!

The countess-palatine from—where from? Well it makes no difference. She was in the museum and the papers said she was gracious, very gracious.

I would do it too, thought Walter, if I were a countess-palatine. What sort of a profession is that?

The king had given audiences—and a dinner—and had said—well, the usual things. But for Walter it

was new and interesting. The welfare of the city seemed to lie heavily on his majesty's heart. It lay heavily on Walter's heart, too; but that did not prevent Walter from admiring this peculiarity of the king. In Africa he would do the same thing.

No, away with Africa!

He threw off his left stocking so violently that it curled around the leg of the chair like a dying earth-worm.

What strange things he had heard of Princess Erika! It was said that she was to have married a grand-duke, but rejected him.

The middle classes were delighted with this news; though not knowing but that it might merely have been stubbornness on the part of the princess.

She was of such a strange nature that she did not know how to behave herself in her high position.

Walter slipped off his other stocking, finding fault with the princess for disregarding the usual customs and conventions. Hm! He wondered if she would like to change places with him, and let him be Prince Erich—and she——

He wondered if she too wore an ugly nightcap. But—no! Princesses would wear caps of diamonds.

Princess Erika!

Walter blew out the light—no, he was on the point of blowing it out. He had selected one of the triangles that Laurens had described in the bed, when suddenly he became aware of a great tumult in the Pieterse home.

Yes, somebody had rung violently three or four times and was still banging at the door. Fire?

Hm! Could it be Princess Erika, he thought, who was coming to change places with him?

Alas, it was only Juffrouw Laps; and she did not come to exchange.

Well, what did she want then, so late in the evening?

Walter pulled himself together and listened.

The compartment where Walter and Laurens slept was a boxed-up arrangement over the sitting-room. Two of their sisters shared the space with them. From considerations of modesty, therefore, the boys always had to get sleepy a quarter of an hour before the young ladies.

The writer is unable to say how much oxygen four family, the female part, of course, was still in the focating; but anyway there wasn't much room in this little nook.

In another closet-affair there was a similar division, and here, too, the hour for retiring was determined by similar laws of modesty.

The reader will now understand why a part of the family, the female part of course, was still in the sitting-room when Walter imagined that Princess Erika had come to exchange places with him.

Juffrouw Laps, who had rushed up the steps like a crazy woman, lurst into the room weeping and moaning and sobbing.

The usual cries of, "What on earth is the matter?" "Lord 'a' mercy—what has happened?" were forthcoming. Walter noticed, too, that the customary glass of water was offered and drunk, and that proper efforts were being made to get the unhappy one to "calm herself."

Juffrouw Laps began her story with the positive assurance that it was impossible for her to utter a word.

It seemed, therefore, that the affair was something important. Walter pulled on one of his stockings and prepared to listen.

"I swear, Juffrouw Pieterse, by the omnipotent God, that I'm so frightened and excited that I can't talk."

"Goodness!"

"Where are your children? In bed? Not all of them, I hope. Really, I can't speak. Give me another glass of water, Trudie. Listen, how my teeth are chattering. That comes from fright, doesn't it? I'm in a tremble all over. Thank you, Trudie. Where's—Stoffel?"

"He's undressing," said Juffrouw Pieterse. "He goes to bed before me and Pietro. Mina makes so much noise, you know; and Trudie must stay with the boys to keep them from fighting. That's why I sleep with Pietro, you see. Stoffel undresses himself, and then he draws the curtain when he hears us on the steps. But why——"

"How that concerns me, you mean? To be sure. I'm just beside myself from fright! And is—Laurens in bed too?"

"Of course! A long time already. He has to go to the printing-house early."

"All in bed! And I—I run through the streets, wretched, crazy, and don't know what to do. Is everybody in bed?—everybody?"

"But what has happened?"



“I’m going to tell you, Juffrouw Pieterse. Oh, if you only knew how frightened I am!”

Consideration of acoustics now led Walter to put on his other stocking.

“You know, Juffrouw Pieterse, that of late so much stealing has been going on.”

“Yes, but——”

“And burglary and murder! And the police can’t catch anybody. You know the old woman and the servant-girl who were murdered in Lommer Street.”

“But three are already behind the bars for it. What more do you want?”

“That’s all right; the murderers are running around scot-free. They’ve locked up three fellows just to keep the people from thinking too much. They don’t want anybody to ask, ‘What are the police for?’ You see what I mean? I tell you that such a low-down rascal, who commits a murder and steals lots of money, cannot hide his bloody clothes; nor the money, either. He’s not used to having so much money. All the neighbors know his coat and breeches; and such a man hasn’t any trunk where he can hide his things. He doesn’t know how to manage with drafts and notes; and he don’t know enough to get away to a foreign country. As for friends to help him get rid of the stolen things, he hasn’t any. I tell you, Juffrouw Pieterse, a murder or a robbery, when they don’t catch the murderer right away—then some respectable person has done it, who has more clothes and boxes and presses and linen—and he has friends among bankers. A common fellow would stick a hundred thousand florins in the bread-box, and the

children would find it when they went to slip a slice of bread and butter. What do you say, Trudie?"

Trudie was not versed in criminal statistics and had never reflected on the matter. At least Walter heard no answer. Curiosity compelled him to draw on his trousers.

"But," he heard his mother saying again, "what has happened to you?"

"What has happened? I am beside myself. Don't you see how I'm trembling? The city is full of murderers!"

"My goodness! How can I help it?"

"You can't. But I am beside myself, and I want to ask your advice. Do they all go to bed so early?—Stoffel—and Laurens—all of them? Look, how I'm shaking. Do you suppose I dare go back to my room?"

"Why not? Do you think you're going to be murdered?"

"Yes. I do think it! The murderers of that old woman and of the servant-girl are still on the war-path. Yesterday at the illumination how many watches did they steal? And the police—what do they do? Nothing, nothing! Yes, they watch you to see if you beat a rug in the morning after ten o'clock. That's what the police do. They don't bother murderers."

"What do you know about the murderers? It's your duty to report them if you know them."

Walter put on his vest and wrapped his muffler around his neck.

"What I know about them! They are besieging

me in my own house. Isn't that pretty rough? I went out at noon to see the boat race on the Amstel; but there was nothing to see, because there was no wind. And such a crowd! All the kings were there, and the visiting princes and princesses, you know; and everybody stared at the carriages, and I did too. Not that I care anything about a king. Goodness, no! For he is only a worm in God's hand, and when the Master doesn't aid him—all is vanity, vanity. Dust and ashes—that's all. But I looked at the carriages, you know, and at the horses, and at the staring crowd. I thought to myself, I will fry the potatoes when I go home. They had been left over from dinner; and when there are any potatoes left over, you know, I always fry them for supper. There was a big crowd, and all were mad because there was no wind; for people are foolish about pleasure and never think of the Master. Worldly, worldly, they were—and the princes and princesses. I thought, well, it's no wonder that there's so much robbery and murder; for they try God's patience. I thought, God will punish you; He's only abiding His time. He always does it, Juffrouw Pieterse! A lady—the creature had red pimples on her face, and was older than you—what do you suppose she had on her head? A turban! She rode in a carriage with four horses. What do you think of that? She was playing with a fan; and, when a prince rode up to her carriage, she stuck out her hand and let the fan go up and down three times. And the prince did that way three times. Were they crazy, or not? What will the Master say to that? If He only doesn't send a pestilence on us!"

“Yes, but the murderers—what did they do to you?”

“Why, certainly—what they did? I am going to tell you. I’m still trembling. I had sliced my potatoes, put them on a saucer and set them away in the cupboard. Then I thought, I will fry them when I come home; for I didn’t expect to stay long in the crowd, for I have been saved by grace and don’t care for worldly things—ah, dear Juffrouw Pieterse, you must call Stoffel, so he can hear what has happened.”

Stoffel was already on his way down; and Walter was glad of it. Walter had heard the noise Stoffel was making putting on his clothes in the adjoining booth, and upon this he builded hopes that he too might be allowed to go down, where he could hear the exciting story better than was possible through the cracks in the floor. In the meantime he had completely dressed himself. The noises below told him of Stoffel’s arrival in the sitting-room. He heard the usual greetings and Juffrouw Laps’s solemn assurance that she was still in such a tremble that she couldn’t say a word. Then he heard her ask immediately where Laurens was.

Laurens? Well, he was asleep.

That youth’s absence seemed to trouble the visitor. She couldn’t proceed. Was it really necessary for Laurens to be present?

“What do you say, Stoffel? Isn’t the city full of thieves and murderers?”

Stoffel drew in his upper lip and tried to make the lower one touch his nose. Let the reader try the

same; then he will know how Stoffel answered, and what his answer meant.

Juffrouw Laps pretended to believe that he had said "yes."

"Don't you see, Stoffel says so too! The city is full of thieves and murderers, and—a respectable person is afraid to go to bed alone any more. It's just that way."

"But—Juffrouw!"

"The police? Nonsense! What good do the police do, when people don't believe in God? That's the truth. Whoever doesn't do that is lost. Human help—I cannot understand at all why Laurens goes to bed so early. You surely know that so much sleep isn't good for anybody. What does the Bible say? Watch and pray! But—everyone according to his notion. I swear before God that I don't dare to go home alone and——"

Walter's curiosity was at high tension. In order to hear better he was leaning over, supporting himself with the chair. The point of support was unsteady. The chair slipped and rattled across the floor, crashing into another piece of furniture.

"Heaven and earth! What are they up to now," groaned the mother. "Laurens, is that you?"

Walter peeped in, "It was me." The result was that he was soon in the midst of the interesting conversation that he had been trying to hear from above.

His entrance took place under unfavorable circumstances. He was blamed for not having been undressed.

“Do you always put on your nightcap before you undress?” cried the mother.

The boy had actually forgotten to take off his nightcap. He was so ashamed that he felt he would like to fall through the floor. He would rather have neglected anything else.

“And—what have you there?”

Alas, our hero looked more ridiculous than anyone could look by simply putting on a nightcap. He had armed himself with an old rusty knife that his father had used in prehistoric times for cutting leather!

During the whole of the Laps recital, which progressed so slowly, he had thought and hoped and intended—yes, he heard something that sounded like, “Where is Walter?” The speaker really did not say it—no, on the contrary, those were the very words she wished to avoid—still, he thought he heard her say them. On this Friday he had acted mean and cowardly; but he was still Walter.

Murderers? Thieves? A lady in danger? What other answer could there be but: “I am here, I, Walter!”

Oh, fate, why did you put that sword in his hand and let him forget to remove that nightcap? Why didn't you divide these two absurdities between Stoffel and Walter! Or why couldn't you put that feathery diadem on the head of the sleeping Laurens? It would have been all the same to him how he looked in his sleep.

Walter was in a rage.

And I am, too. Towards Femke his chivalry had remained in the background; and now it must burst forth at a doubtful call from Juffrouw Laps!

In his anger he threw the weapon down violently and allowed it to rebound across the room. He slapped the nightcap on the table.

No one would have thought that the little man could be so vehement. His mother, with her usual solicitousness, inquired into the condition of his mind, asking if he was only cracked, or downright crazy.

"I tell you," said the visitor, "you ought not to worry that child so much."

"Go to bed at once!" cried the mother.

"Why can't you let the child stay here? But—oh, yes! I was going to tell you about my potatoes."

Walter stayed. For this privilege he was indebted to the general curiosity.

"Just imagine, when I came home about half past ten o'clock—I couldn't get away earlier on account of the crush, you know. Don't you know, I don't care for these big occasions. Well, when I got home—the city is full of thieves, murderers, and that must not be forgotten—well, my potatoes were—what do you think my potatoes were? They were—gone!"

"Gone?"

"Gone!"

"All gone?"

"All gone!"

"Your potatoes—gone?"

"My potatoes—all completely gone!"

"But——"

“I tell you those thieves and murderers did it. Who else could have done it? Thieves and murderers in my house! And I wanted to ask you—for I’m afraid in my room——”

Walter’s eyes fairly shone.

“I wanted to ask, if perhaps—your son Stoffel——”

Stoffel’s face was a study, a curiosity. If the said thieves and murderers could have seen it they would have been greatly pleased, for it bore evidence of Stoffel’s intention to leave them undisturbed in their work.

“But, Juffrouw,” he said, “haven’t you a cat in your room?”

“A cat? A cat to fight murderers with!”

“No, Juffrouw, not to fight murderers; but a cat that might have eaten the potatoes.”

“I don’t know anything about a cat. I only know that the city is full of low-down people when so many murders are committed and no one tries to catch the murderers. Not that I am anxious about my life—no, not at all. When the Master calls me I shall say, ‘Let thy daughter go in peace; my eyes have seen thy glory.’”

“But, woman, why didn’t you look in your closet, and under the bed?”

“I didn’t want to do that, Juffrouw Pieterse! The Lord will take care of me—but one must not try the Lord’s patience. I would not go in the closet, or look under the bed—not for everything in the world! For of course he’s there, and that’s why I wanted to ask if



your son—Stoffel, or, if Stoffel doesn't want to, if perhaps your son—Laurens, or——”

“But, Juffrouw, why didn't you call the neighbors?”

Thus spoke Stoffel.

“The neighbors? Well, I guess they know about it. The man who lives under me is afraid of a poodle-dog, not to mention a murderer. There's a man living next to me; but, you know, he is—what shall I say—he is a sort of bachelor, and I don't want to get talked about. You know a woman must always think of her reputation, and not get mixed up in gossip.”

It did not occur to anyone to ask what sort of a creature Stoffel was. Was he a bachelor? Or did his position as a teacher protect him against any worldly suspicion?

“And, besides,” continued the seductive Laps, “do you think all men have courage? No! They're as afraid of a thief as they are of death. Last week an insolent beggar was on the steps, and the fellow wouldn't leave. Do you think the men did anything to him? Scared to death! But, I tell you, I got hold of him in a hurry and——”

She had gone too far, and she saw it.

“Well, I would have done that if I hadn't been a woman; for a women must never use violence. It isn't becoming. What do you say, Trudie? I ran and shut my door. Wasn't that right? No, none of the men-folk has any courage!”

None of the men-folk! Walter felt insulted. He was swelling with suppressed courage; he was eager

for a fray. At least, he was eager to show that he was an exception to Juffrouw Laps's general indictment. Of course Juffrouw Laps noticed this.

"Well, if Stoffel doesn't want to——"

"To tell the truth, I——"

"And if Laurens is already asleep—and if—if no one else will——"

She arose.

"Then I suppose I must, relying upon God, go alone. But it's horrible for a woman to be entirely alone!"

She looked at them all in turn, all except the one she was talking to. Walter felt that he was being forgotten, or overlooked. This only increased his latent courage and made him burn with a desire to be numbered with the knighthood of the house.

"Yes, if there's nobody here who's not afraid——"

"I'm not afraid!"

All but Juffrouw Laps were surprised. She was a good psychologist, and had not expected anything else. It was her part, however, to pretend to be as much surprised as any of the rest.

"You?"

"You, Walter?"

"Boy, are you crazy? You?"

"Yes, I. I'm not afraid; not if there were ten in the closet and a hundred under the bed!"

A little Luther! But with a difference. Luther had a God in whom he felt he could trust—reinforced by a few grand-dukes. Walter, without any grand-dukes, was ready to enter the field against a God who

was allowing any number of murderers to take shelter under the roof and bed of Juffrouw Laps.

“Boy!”

“I’ll risk it.”

“Let him go, Juffrouw Pieterse. You understand—it’s company for me to have such a child with me. Then I’m not frightened so badly, if a murderer is in the closet. Nobody wants to be entirely alone. Isn’t that so?”

Juffrouw Laps gained her point: Walter was permitted to go with her.

It was principally their vanity that caused the Pieterse to consent so readily to Juffrouw Laps’s request and allow her to take Walter away to act as her castellan. Not one of them felt that it was a good thing for Walter to go with the Juffrouw; but they were all proud of his courage. The story would get noised abroad, and people would pass it on to their friends. Juffrouw Pieterse would see to it that the people knew it was “the same young gentlemen, you know, that went home with Dr. Holsma.”

Yes, and then people would say: “There’s something in those Pieterse children.”

Mothers like to hear such things.

With his package under his arm Walter marched away with Juffrouw Laps to do battle for that pious lady. That prehistoric weapon he left behind, on her assuring him that she had a well-filled store of weapons and ammunition enough to kill all the murderers that he would have occasion to contend with.

## CHAPTER XXVII

**W**ALTER shuddered as he crossed Juffrouw Laps's threshold. He reflected, and wondered how he could have entered upon this knightly expedition without considering certain details connected with it and inseparable from it.

The first thing she offered him, of course, was the fried potatoes, that dainty dish which the murderers had greedily made way with!

Walter was beginning to feel that the game wasn't worth the candle. The adventure didn't offer sufficient outlet for his chivalry. In fact, he thought something other than chivalry was necessary to face single-handed and alone those fried potatoes and Juffrouw Laps's persistent attentions.

"Make yourself at home and eat all you want. Don't be a bit embarrassed. Or would you rather take off your coat first? You know, you're to stay all night with me."

Walter preferred to keep on his coat for the present.

And I have a dram for you, too, my boy—something extra. It's from Fockink's. You know where he has his distillery, there in that narrow street. You must never pass along there. Bad women live in that street. They stand at the doors and windows, don't you know; and that isn't good for a bachelor like you."

Walter, the "bachelor," looked surprised. He was abashed; though he was not displeased. This promotion was more flattering than going into "business."

Still, he was embarrassed. Juffrouw Laps found it desirable, therefore, to continue along this line.

"Certainly, Walter, you're a bachelor. Don't you know that? It's only because at home they treat you like a child. I tell you, you're a bachelor, just as much so as anybody else. Do you think I like Stoffel as well as I do you? No, no, no! Not a bit of it! I like you lots better. Don't you want a pipe to smoke? You are man enough for that. Of course you are; and why shouldn't you smoke a pipe like other men?"

Men, men!

Walter answered that he couldn't smoke yet. It cost him an effort to make the admission; but his first attempt to equal Stoffel in that respect had turned out badly.

"So? You don't smoke?" She omitted his "yet."

"Well, it's a good thing. It's a stupid habit in men. And forever the terrible smoke! I know other young gentlemen who do not smoke. For instance, there is Piet Hammel. He's as old as you, but a little smaller. He's going to marry a cousin of mine; and he doesn't smoke either."

Walter felt better now. He was interested.

"Yes, they're going to get married about—well, I don't know exactly when. But they intend to marry. I tell you, you are a real bachelor; and it's awfully stupid of them still to treat you like a child. I've told your mother so a hundred times. There on the street

just now, when we were together—I'm a delicate woman; but do you think I was afraid?—with you with me? Not a bit. Not a trace of fear. And why? Because everybody could see that I had a man with me. I ought to have taken hold of your arm—you're almost taller than I am—but I didn't do it because you had a package. And then—the people talk so much! The watchman might have seen it, and he would have spread the news broadcast that I had been seen at night with a gentleman."

With a gentleman! Walter was listening.

"A woman must always think of her reputation. But we're here at home now, and that's very different, entirely different. I know that of course you wouldn't tell anything bad about me. Whoever tells anything bad on a woman isn't a true gentleman. You know that."

Yes, Walter knew it. He understood Juffrouw Laps better than she imagined.

"What I wanted to say was, you must never go through that street. So long as you were a child, it made no difference. But now! Let me fill your glass for you."

Walter drank.

O Fancy, my muse, where art thou?

"How do you like it?"

Walter owned that the liquor had a pleasant taste.

Satan's handmaid filled the glasses again. They were "so small," really "mere thimbles."

"And you must eat something, dearest. Oh, I have always thought so much of you! It's good for you to have a little dram like that."

Walter began to eat.

“Just take off your coat; there’s nobody here but us.”

Quite so. Walter did take off his coat.

“And I’m going to sit close to you, for you are a dear, good, sweet boy.”

Fancy, Fancy!

The liquor was strong, and Walter drank more of it than was good for him. He lost some of his modesty, and hardly knew what he was saying to the talkative Juffrouw, as she asked questions from time to time. She was not quite satisfied with the way things were going, but hoped for the best.

Occasionally Walter found time to wonder why he was there, what the purpose of the enforced visit might be. His hostess seemed to have forgotten all about those thieves and murderers; and when he reminded her of them, she showed a spirit of valor that did him good. For he and his valor were undone.

“I will do them! Do you think I’m afraid of such a fellow? Well, I guess not. Not afraid of three of them. I wouldn’t be afraid of ten of them—I’m not afraid of the whole world. I will do them.”

All the better, thought Walter; for then he wouldn’t have to “do” them.

They now heard something rustling around in the closet, or else they imagined they heard something. Walter was frightened. He was a perfect child again.

“Stay here, and I will see what it is,” cried the Juffrouw. “Do you think I would let them beat you, or stab you, or murder you, my boy! Never! Who-

ever touches you will have to walk over me. But I will give them all they need."

She went out, taking the light with her, to see what was the matter—if anything. She was careful to leave Walter in the dark long enough for him to wish for her return. The tables were being turned. A little more, and the boy would seek protection under her apron.

"But, Juffrouw——"

"I will let you call me Christine. That's my name."

This was too much for Walter. He preferred to avoid addressing her directly.

"But hadn't I better go home now?"

"Not at all. You don't want to leave me, do you? You know your mother is in bed asleep now. Besides, it was understood that you were to spend the night here and take breakfast with me."

Breakfast! The boy hadn't been doing anything else for an hour. Was that to continue till morning?

"I'll tell you what! Just undress yourself; and you needn't be a bit ashamed before me. I will make down a pallet for you there in the corner. When I'm here alone—just a woman—with all the thieves and robbers—oh, it's so horrible!"

Walter did not dare to say no; nor did he dare to do what was proposed so enticingly. He hesitated.

She talked sweetly and persuaded him.

He began to——

The child was as if hypnotized.

O Fancy, Fancy! Where art thou?



## CHAPTER XXVIII

**I**T will be remembered that on this significant Friday a boat-race had been arranged for the amusement of the visiting princes and princesses.

It had to be called off on account of a disinclination on the side of the wind to fill its part of the program, or rather, to fill the sails. For it was to have been a "sail." Rowing was not in style then; it was not considered dignified and manly. Besides, the boats were not built to be propelled in this way.

The boat-race had been canceled; but the crowd remained, and continued to discharge its enthusiasm for royalty till a late hour. It was a great day; and the populace perspired and shouted and howled.

It was so hot that kings and princesses perspired like ordinary mortals. They flourished fans indolently. At that time there was a special kind of fan: "joujoux de Normandie."

It was observed that the old countess-palatine manipulated her fan more elegantly than anyone else. No doubt it was through this "gentle art" that she exerted her greatest influence on humanity.

Gradually the carriages of the distinguished guests disappeared, and the knightly horsemen tired of the saddle. The day drew to a close. The populace pushed and crowded and sang and hurrahed and drank. Fireworks were discharged, to express, so

the newspapers said, the inexpressible love of the people for princes and princesses.

Oh, those firecrackers, and the danger in them! Quick, quick—throw it—a second longer and it will burst in your hand—hurrah!

It was magnificent—the danger and thrilling anxiety. There was a tradition that somebody had once held a firecracker in his hand too long and had been badly hurt by it. This traditional “somebody” was now inspiring the revelers with fresh enthusiasm.

So it was on that evening, before the city authorities had prohibited the use of fireworks. After the houses had been covered with slate, it was thought that there was too much danger of fire in firecrackers, but on that evening, when the houses still had thatch roofs, the dangerous pleasure of Amsterdam youth was unrestrained.

And the other dangerous pleasures! How many lasses went home with their skirts singed, some of them hardly getting home at all. Interesting adventures! And a boy—“those boys have to have their noses in everything”—yes, a youth came very near getting a load in his face. Thrilling delight!

The crowd was now in the street where Juffrouw Laps resided. The reader will recall that Walter was spending the night with her.

Boom! went a gun, or a cannon-cracker; and Walter awoke just as his affectionate hostess and religious adviser was going to give him a kiss.

Juffrouw Laps had burned her sinful lips. “Lord have mercy on us, what is that!” she cried.

Both ran to the open window. Ordinarily a respectable Hollandish girl never leaves her window open at night; but the extreme heat of the evening must be urged in Juffrouw Laps's favor.

It was clear to them at once that they had not been fired upon by those "murderers," for nobody paid any attention to them or showed any interest in them. Other windows were open, as well; and on all sides people were looking out. Right and left a cannonade of firecrackers was going on.

In the interest of privacy Juffrouw Laps took the precaution to blow out the light as quickly as possible. Another might have neglected this.

Walter looked down on it all with the delight of a child. He forgot the insistent kindness of his hostess; he thought of nothing but the crowd below and their antics. The noise and tumult sobered him; and it even had a quieting effect on Juffrouw Laps.

"How foolish the people are. They push one another hither and thither and don't know themselves why they do it."

"Click, click!" answered an enthusiast with a gun. He was in the midst of a bevy of girls, who scattered in an uproar.

"They're all drunk," said Juffrouw Laps. "I wish they would go home. I'm tired—and it's two o'clock."

"Just a little more!" begged Walter. "I'm not tired—not a bit!"

"I'm afraid you're catching cold. For you know, the night air after a hot day—well, put on your cap, dearest. I wouldn't have this night air to give you

a cold for everything in the world. Look, there goes another one." It was a Roman candle.

"Amour à la plus belle.  
Honneur au plus vaillant——"

"Why don't they sing Dutch? Do you understand any of it?"

Walter knew something of the handsome Dunois, who slew so many Turks and received as his reward the daughter of the duke, his master. How would a knight be rewarded after he had already received one reward? Or how would it have been if the master had had no daughter?

While Walter was asking his lady friend such difficult questions as these, they heard an outburst of cries and abuse and oaths below. A reaction had set in. It was a perfect riot. The crowd swayed first one way then the other, according as one party or the other was in the ascendancy.

Non-combatants were pushing their way out; combatants, themselves crowded, were crowding others. Cries of "help" were heard. Mothers, with babies in their arms, attested their fear; women in delicate health made their condition known.

The press was worst on the corner, whither the revelers were streaming from three directions. Here was located a popular restaurant and drinking-place, which was probably the destination of the stream coming from Amstel Street. The second stream, coming from Utrecht Street, evidently had the same objective in view. The strongest current was flowing

from the belligerent group, which was now squeezed into close quarters.

From his recent experience Walter knew what it meant to be in such a mob. Whoever fell was walked over. But it really wasn't so bad as that: to fall was impossible. The danger was in being crowded off the street into basements, where limbs and necks might be easily broken. In this respect there was more danger than there had been the evening before in Kalver Street.

"Christian souls!" cried Juffrouw Laps. "I'm getting right sick at the stomach."

Walter's condition was about the same. All at once he seized her arm. He thought that he saw somebody—somebody who looked like—

"That's right, dear. Hold fast to me. It's simply death and murder!"

Walter did not say anything.

"Isn't it enough to run anybody crazy?" continued the dear Juffrouw. "Hold fast to me, and remember that I am your Christine."

He was remembering something else.

"Don't be afraid—Lord, that child's beside himself—nobody shall hurt you. I will take care of you."

He held on to her arm all the tighter; otherwise he was as if turned to stone.

"I wouldn't pay any attention to it, sweetheart. But—it is bad enough. Do you see that girl there with the North Holland cap on? I wouldn't like to be in her place."

"It is—Femke! O God, it is Femke!"

Shaking off Juffrouw Laps, who attempted to hold him back, he rushed down the steps and in a few minutes was in the thickest of the fray.

He fought his way through the crowd like a madman, soon reaching the point where he had seen Femke. She, however, had disappeared. A man with flashy cap and sailor's jacket, who from above had looked like her escort, was still contending with the crowd. It seemed as if the two had come arm in arm through Amstel Street.

"Is there a girl here with a North Holland cap on?"

The man was too busy fighting and wrestling for standing-room to make answer. Meanwhile, Walter noticed that the fellow was struggling toward the "Herberge," and concluded that his lady must have taken refuge there.

Walter paid no more attention to the punches and blows he received. He was only concerned to give as many blows as were necessary to hasten his arrival at the restaurant. The place was about as badly crowded as the street, but there was no fighting going on.

Yes, Walter had made a good beginning: yesterday in the "Polish Coffeehouse," to-day in the "Juniper Berry"—thrown in there, fighting his way in here.

He was in the restaurant at last, looking for Femke. Now he thought that he had discovered her, standing on a step, or something of the kind. With lips tightly closed, her arms crossed, the girl was looking quietly down on the multitude as if in silent contempt. The rim was torn from her cap and was hanging down.

Walter thought that he even saw blood on her face—Femke's dear face!

He was exhausted and could not reach her. He looked at her. She did not see him.

She stood there proud and haughty. He called to her. She did not hear.

"O God! she despises me. I deserve it for my cowardice at Holsma's."

"Boy," said the woman behind the bar, "we don't have any bellowing here. If you want to bellow go to your mother."

Easier said than done. He couldn't move a peg, such was the press. He was shoved against the counter; and it was impossible for him to keep sight of Femke. The tears began to roll down his cheeks.

"What are you doing in such a crowd anyway?" continued the woman, "when you're so weak. You look as flimsy as a dish-rag. What have you been doing? Let me give you a glass of cognac."

He would have been only too glad to pay for his place; but, as he "received at home everything that he needed," he did not have the wherewithal. Still, there was no danger of his being thrown out. The crowd, which was threatening to expend its remaining energy in destroying the liquids of the place, was now occupying the barmaid's attention. I should say Mrs. Goremost's attention. She was the proprietress.

The girl continued to hold her position of advantage. There was something scornful in her features. "Who dares!" she seemed to say.

Walter was feeling bad. She looked over in his

direction, but without seeing him. He called; but she did not hear.

Then the fellow with the flashy cap and sailor jacket appeared in the door. He had not been one of the belligerents; but he had suffered the fate of neutral powers. As his clothing testified, both parties had been his enemies.

So intent was the fellow on getting in that he did not even take time to return the shoves and cuffs that he received. Twice, three times he was crowded back; for where so many want the same thing, it isn't easy to obtain. Nevertheless, he had one advantage over the others, who sought only a resting-place and a glass of liquor. He was incited by something else.

Walter hoped with all his heart that the fellow would succeed in reaching Femke. She looked so lonely in the midst of that wild mob. If he had been stronger, he would have—but she wouldn't have anything to do with him. Wouldn't she push him off, just as she did the insolent fellow who first caught hold of her apron?

The girl seemed now to spy the sailor. She nodded to him and smiled, as if to encourage him. Or was she thanking him for his fidelity? Her smile bore the message that she was uninjured, and fearless. Yes, she stood there a statue of repose.

The sailor nodded back.

He would never have denied her, Walter thought.

Mrs. Goremost happened to see the new arrival; and, from the way she greeted him, he seemed to be a frequent visitor to her place:



"Hello, Klaas. Are you there too? You're out of breath, aren't you?"

She gave orders to let him through, and even came out a few steps and helped open up the way for him.

Thus it happened that Klaas Verlaan found standing-room at the counter not far from Walter.

"Well, they've made the most of you!"

He saw it the same way. He was never certain of a moment's recreation before bedtime. Walter, as well as the girl who still maintained her elevated position in the corner, agreed with the bar-woman's verdict.

"Had a good day?" continued the woman. "It was bad about the boat-race."

Klaas placed his finger on his mouth, as if he were going to tell her a secret. He wanted to tell of an adventure with Princess Erika.

"A glass of corn?" translated the bar-woman, but without guessing the right thing.

"Half and half?"

"Nor that either."

"Red?"

This time Klaas was particularly dainty and hard to please. He declined regularly whatever she suggested and continued to exert himself to draw her into a more confidential talk. He had had the pleasure of pulling Princess Erika out of the water.

On the outside they were still singing, "Amour à la plus belle."

"The devil take those Welsh songs!" cried one of the drinkers. "We are Dutchmen forever!"

“ Yes, we are Dutchman forever——”

“ And our prince——”

“ Sh!”

“ I will sing what I please; and, if anybody doesn't want to sing ”—he struck himself on the chest, and the whole party was Dutch and enthusiastic over royalty. “ Our Prince ” was sung lustily, and to a finish.

“ Hurrah!”

“ Yes, when we were still true Dutchmen——”

“ Yes, when we were still true Dutchmen——”

“ And under the republic!”

“ Long live the republic!”

“ You all ought to have seen a yacht-race then.”

“ And our prince——”

“ Under the republic all men were equal.”

“ Equal. No difference at all.”

“ Down with the tyrants!”

“ They're not a bit better than we are!”

“ They suck the life out of the people.”

“ Yes, they bleed us.”

“ And why? Because you're all cowardly dogs.”

“ Yes, they're all cowardly dogs.”

“ You put your necks under the yoke.”

“ Whenever a king comes around, or an emperor, or a prince, then all of you are so frightened you tremble like an aspen leaf.”

“ Yes, like an aspen leaf!”

“ If you fellows were——”

“ All men are born free.”

“ Yes, we were born free and equal.”

“ And true Dutch hearts—what say you, Mrs. Gore-

mest? What do you think, that's a daughter of M'neer——"

The name died on the speaker's lips. He became pale.

"A daughter of M'neer——!"

"Certainly. Ask Verlaan."

Verlaan nodded.

"Is that so, Klaas? Really and truly? Why then does she stand there dressed that way—like an ordinary girl?"

"Oh, those clothes came from my Gertie, you know. Rich people have——"

"Come, boys, we must go home now. Mother Goreмест needs sleep, too. We are not made of iron; we are flesh and blood."

"Down with the tyrants! We were born free. True Dutch hearts——"

"Sh! The young lady——"

"What? That girl? What then?"

"Sh! The daughter of—but don't say a word. Damme if it isn't so—the daughter of M'neer—Kopperlith!"

"Kopperlith on *Keizersgracht*? What are you talking about, man! Kopperlith—on *Keizersgracht*!"

"Yes, of course. Come, we're going."

"His daughter? His—— natural daughter?"

"That's right. You understand it now; but keep quiet about it."

The true Dutch hearts and republicans paid and left the bar.

It was a sudden whim of Klaas Verlaan's to make his ward a child of *Keizersgracht*; but it brought

him in more ducats than he cared to admit afterward.

Kopperlith? Kopperlith? on *Keizersgracht*? Femke on *Keizersgracht*! And on the day after to-morrow he was to begin work for this wealthy gentleman.

His head swam. Was he still Walter Pieterse? He doubted it. Before he had quite come to himself, he was forced through the door with other late stragglers. It was time for Mrs. Goreмест to close.

The street was comparatively quiet now. Walter remained near the "Herberge," which to him was a sort of temple where his Goddess was being worshiped. Now and then somebody else was pitched out the door, who would have been glad to stay longer. It was not every day that one got an opportunity to see a daughter of M'neer Kopperlith. Some wanted to join the triumvirate of Verlaan, the republican speaker, and Mrs. Goreмест; but the three felt themselves strong enough to do the work and share the rewards.

At last the outflow ceased, and Walter was just going to peep through the curtains of the glass door, when the door opened again and the republican emerged. Walter heard Klaas call to him:

"There on the corner in Paarden Street, you know, if it costs a dollar more, that's all right. Tell the cabby——"

Walter understood. The republican was to get a cab—for Femke?

Walter waited. In the meanwhile, Mrs. Goreмест had locked the door and drawn the curtains, so that it was impossible for him to look in now.

In a short time a carriage drove up, and the republican sprang out of it. The door of Mrs. Goreмест's establishment opened again, and Klaas Verlaan with the ostensible daughter of Kopperlith appeared.

"Femke, I am here!" Walter cried, hurrying to her. "I am here. Oh, Femke, don't go with the strange men!"

"What in the devil are you doing here again!" snorted Verlaan, seizing Walter by the collar to pull him back into the restaurant. "What do you want? And who are you?"

"Femke, don't go with the strange men. I will take you home, I, Walter."

"The boy is weak in the upper story," affirmed Mrs. Goreмест. "He's been bellowing around her the whole evening like a calf, and he hasn't spent a doit."

Walter reached for Femke's hand; and then he noticed how curiously she was rigged out. She was completely covered. Of her head, face, shoulders, figure—nothing was to be seen. Mrs. Goreмест had contributed her cloak; but what would one not do for a Kopperlith? Still, she was saving: Only the stump of one tallow candle was burning. It flickered strangely, giving to everything a ghostly appearance.

"Is it you, Erich?" the girl asked.

"Femke, Femke, for God's sake, don't go with those strange men!"

Tearing himself away from Verlaan, he threw himself at Femke's feet. He pulled aside her cloak and covered her hand with tears and kisses.

"Just like I tell you," declared Mrs. Goreмест. "The boy is as crazy as a bedbug."

“Femke, I will never deny you again. Strike me, tread on me, kill me, but—don’t go with those strange men.”

“Light!” cried the girl peremptorily—a word that even a Dutchman understands.

The republican took the candle from the counter and held it so that the light fell on Walter’s face. The boy was still kneeling. Through an opening in her hood the girl looked down on him and was silent. She did not withdraw the hand that Walter held closely pressed to his lips.

Verlaan made a motion as if to remove the intruder; but the girl stopped him with a look. Then she laid her free hand on Walter’s head, saying simply:

“My brother!”

“Another descendent of Kopperlith!” growled the republican. The young people have strange ideas about how to spend the night.”

When Walter came to his senses, he was in the street again. The carriage had driven away—whether with her, or without her; whether with the two men, or without them—that he did not know. It made no difference to him: she had called him “brother,” seriously, solemnly. She had spoken clearly and distinctly.

“O God! I thank thee. Thou art kind and compassionate. I didn’t know that Femke could speak like that. She must have felt it down in her heart.”

To-morrow, he thought, he would become immensely wealthy—in “business”—and, of course, he was going to be a king again, and still more: For Femke he would be more than a brother! Juffrouw

Laps had awakened in him—well, something, he did not know himself what it was. His heart rejoiced; he walked upon stilts, as tired as he was, and wondered that his head did not bump against the clouds.

## CHAPTER XXIX

FOR anyone in Walter's present mood, there are only two things in the world; self, and—nothingness!

Walter looked about him. "Butter Market," he read on a sign. He noticed that in the street socks could be bought, wagons hired, etc., etc.

But what did it all mean? Nothing. He had kissed Femke's hand!

It is too bad that the world did not sink out of existence on that summer night.

If Walter had noticed such an occurrence, he might have asked if Femke was hurt; otherwise the phenomenon would not have disturbed him.

The reader will understand, of course, that on this eventful night the world did not go down.

Walter forgave the sun for rising. He even excused the Butter Market for being such a hot place; but it was difficult for him to convince himself that it was not all a dream.

A new feeling took possession of him. His ambitious plans of a material nature receded into the background of consciousness. His one desire now was to love Femke—and win her love. Those continents that were expecting salvation from him might wait.

He thought of Femke and her soft hand. Never had her hand felt like that. Formerly it had seemed



harder and rougher; but, of course, he had just been mistaken about it. He imagined, too, that hitherto he had not marked her voice well, nor her carriage. Surely, he had never seen the true Femke till to-night—better, this morning.

But—Klaas Verlaan and his rough companions! What did all that gab about M'neer Kopperlith mean? There were other questions too; but—Femke had called him brother; and that was one thing which with him was as firm as the rock of Gibraltar.

Brooding thus, he slipped along through the streets. Weak and tired, he came to the "Dam." Here he saw a long row of carriages. The coachmen sat in their places waiting for the princely guests, who had wanted to see a Holland sunrise. The sun was already in sight; but there were no princes and princesses to see him. A few laborers were looking on indifferently.

Yesterday Walter would have exerted himself to see a live, fullgrown king, just to find out if he looked like Macbeth, or Arthur, or Lear. To-day he was so tired that kings did not interest him.

He was just starting on, when the coachmen suddenly assumed a rigid attitude. A boy remarked that "they" were coming now. He was right: they did come; and all, except one old lady, drove away so rapidly that scarcely anyone saw them. She touched her coachman on the shoulder.

"She has forgotten something," said the boy.

Three or four cavaliers stormed back into the palace and brought her fan. While they were gone, the boys wondered at the pimples on her face. Wal-

ter's pictures had had nothing of that kind. How different Femke's face was!

Walter trudged along further; and, without thinking of where he was going, he came to the meadow where Femke and her mother dried their clothes. He sat down on the grass, intending to wait for the first signs of life in Femke's home. He was not certain that she was there; he did not know but that she might still be at Holsma's; but there would be somebody there.

Overcome by weariness he lay down and gradually fell asleep. His cap came off, rolled down into the ditch and disappeared in the mud.

If anyone passed by, he remarked that there lay a drunken fellow. Yes, youth begins early. Possibly the fellow was sick; but then the police would take care of him. Nobody hurt him; nobody touched him. His dreams were undisturbed.

He dreamed of various things; but the principal object of his dreams was a young girl, who was standing on a platform playing ball with heavy men, as if that were nothing. Suddenly it was little Sietske Holsma.

Then in his dreams he heard a voice:

"Goodness, boy, how did you get here?"

At first the voice was far away, then nearer, and finally quite near. He had the dim impression that somebody was pulling him up to a sitting posture.

"Sietske!" he whispered, still sleeping.

"Yes, that's my name. How did you know it?"

"Sietske——!"

"Why, certainly. Who told you? And what are

you doing here. It isn't very respectable. Are you drunk? And so young, too."

He called Sietske's name again.

"You may call me by my first name, if you want to; but how does it come? Did Femke tell you? It's a real disgrace to lie here like a hog. What were you going to say?"

Walter rubbed his eyes and felt of his head. "I would like to wash myself," he said, not yet wide awake.

"All right," cried Mrs. Claus. "And you're not hurt, are you? Where is your cap?"

"Wash—with cold water," Walter said.

"Good! Come to the pump with me." She led him through the house and across the back yard.

"You needn't be afraid to undress here; nobody can see you. But how did you happen to call me by my first name all at once. Not that I'm offended at all."

Walter was still too much asleep to recall what had happened to him during the past few hours; so he only said that he had a headache and must wash himself first.

Mrs. Claus, noticing that he was ashamed to undress, hung some quilts on the fence, thus converting the yard into a sort of room. It never occurred to her that her own presence might embarrass him. Walter was still not quite pleased with the outlook for a bath; but since yesterday he had been thinking of other things as strange.

He began to strip, allowing Mrs. Claus to help him, just as if he had been fifteen years younger than he was. To Mrs. Claus he was only a child.

She laid him on a bench under the spout and began to pump. At the first drops he shivered; then the water flooded his head and shoulders. He could neither see nor speak. His efforts to speak she interpreted as calls for more water.

"Yes, this will be good for you." Her words were drowned by the splashing water.

"You didn't hurt yourself, did you? Do you think that will be enough now? I've pumped till I've got a pain in my side. But if you think that——"

She stopped all at once, but still held on to the pump handle, as if to show her willingness to continue.

"I forgot entirely to"—she began pumping again—"wash you off with green soap. Femke always washes herself with it. It makes the skin nice and smooth.—You ought to see your back now. It shines like a looking-glass."

Walter wanted to say something but couldn't.

"Yes, and your forehead, too. It's the green soap that does it. I guess your mother never washes you with green soap, does she? Then one must scour and scrub and rub. But, if you are not used to soap——"

She lifted that terrible pump handle again.

"I believe this will be about enough," Walter blubbered. His mouth was so full of water that again Mrs. Claus did not understand him.

"Green soap is good for corns, and for rheumatism." She was pumping away for dear life.

Walter finally succeeded in rescuing himself and the bench from that destructive stream of water. He was now able to make his cries for mercy understood; but

he was not yet able to get up. Besides, the good woman had hung his clothes out of his reach, and he was ashamed. He remained sitting.

"Do you want anything else?" inquired the water nymph.

"No, no, no!" he answered quickly. She was already lifting the pump-handle again. "But——"

The simple, innocent woman did not understand; and, when he continued to sit there like a helpless lump of misery, she asked:

"Do you have a pain anywhere?"

"No, I haven't any pains."

"Are you tired?"

He was still tired, and said so.

"And I woke you up! I'll tell you what, you must go to sleep and take a good nap."

She began drying him off, as if that were a usual thing in her day's work. Then she rolled him up in a sheet and carried him off like a sack of clothes. He could not but notice the way she laid him down. Then she covered him warmly.

"Straighten out your legs, my boy."

Walter did as she said, and experienced an indescribable feeling of comfort. And when she punched him and patted him and tucked him in, and said: "Poor child, you can sleep good now. This is Femke's bed, you know——" then he was more than comfortable; he was delighted.

When he awakened at about four o'clock in the afternoon he heard whispering voices. He listened, at first to find out where he was, and then to understand what was being said.

It seemed as if there were a plot further to confuse Sietske with Femke in his mind.

“Yes, Sietske; but what does he mean by lying out like that? If I were his mother——”

The answer was:

“Cousin, I don’t suppose his mother knows about it. Hermann did the same thing once. That’s the way boys are.”

Oho! Sietske was there; and Mrs. Claus was her cousin, and her name was Sietske too! And that girl—there in Mrs. Goremest’s place?

His thoughts became more and more confused; though physically he felt well.

How would it do, he thought, to tear a little piece out of the sheet, so as to be able to examine it to-morrow and make certain of himself and his adventures?

If he had been accustomed to fine bedlinen at home, he might now have taken an especial pleasure in Mrs. Claus’s extremely rough homemade linen. Hm! He had always dreamed of princesses sleeping on embroidered silk, among diamonds and pearls! He did not yet know that it is possible to conceive royal and imperial highnesses otherwise at night, and that perhaps a princess might sometimes be willing to tousele Femke’s bed.

He looked about the room. There was another small bed, where, he supposed, Femke’s mother slept. Across the room was the chimney. Here were small shelves decorated with works of art. Walter noticed the “resurrection of Lazarus.” Four chairs were in the room. One was standing by his bed, and on it his clothes were carefully arranged.

In the middle of the room stood a table; and the drawer was partly open. It was too full. Father Jansen's woolen socks were peeping out while they waited for repairs. Walter wondered if those other objectionable articles were there too.

On the wall, at the head of his bed, hung a crucifix, with a small basin of holy water. With that she crosses herself, he thought. He stuck his hand into it: it was dry. The whole arrangement was fastened to an embroidered piece of cardboard, and, when he touched it, something fell from behind it.

It looked like a large-sized letter. Walter picked it up and looked for the address. He felt that it must be a letter from Femke to him. Then he reproached himself, and, trembling with emotion, restored the piece of paper to its place. He had held it up to the light: it was the Ophelia that he had presented her after his illness! She had treasured the picture together with the most sacred thing she possessed.

He was wide awake now; but who wouldn't wake up on receiving a letter from Heaven?

He dressed himself and went into the other room, where he supposed Mrs. Claus and Sietske were. Not a soul was to be seen. For the first time it occurred to him that after those few words he had heard nothing more. The girl had surely visited her "cousin" and then gone away.

But Mrs. Claus herself? Perhaps she, too, had gone away. This was the case; however, she had not gone out without leaving behind her a peculiar sign of her uncouth character and lack of refinement. On a small table, before which stood an inviting chair,

lay two pieces of bread and butter of her standard make. Beside them was a pot of coffee. To be sure, it was cold now; but—well, Walter acted quickly “according to his convictions.”

Other thoughts now forced themselves on his mind. The “House of Pieterse” appeared to his mind’s eye as a menacing waterspout. In the face of this danger difficult questions that had been clamoring for answer had to be forgotten.

To go home? For heaven’s sake, no!

His mother, Stoffel, his sisters—all had turned into Macbethan witches. In his imagination, even Leentje had deserted him and was asking him to beg forgiveness for his shameful behavior. He thought of the prodigal son; though he knew that no calf, fat or otherwise, would be slaughtered on his return.

*Sakkerloot!* I haven’t done anything wrong; I haven’t squandered anything—not a doit of my inheritance! Have I allowed the wine to run out? Not a drop!

But something must have been the matter; for—he did not dare to go home.

Have I had any pleasure? Have I enjoyed any feast with four young ladies? No! Have I allowed hounds to run around loose in the banquet-hall? Have I had any negro servant to hold my horse?

There he took his stand. And he stayed there. Of camels and girls and wine he felt that he was innocent; but himself, and his adventures of the night, he was unable further to explain.

“I wish I were a crumb of bread,” he sighed, as he



stuck one into his mouth, "then I would know where I belong."

Doubtless the first crumb of bread that was ever envied by a ruler.

Go to America?

Yes, if he only had those hundred florins that Mr. Motto had relieved him of. Of course that worthy gentleman was now living like a prince on the money. At least, Juffrouw Pieterse had said as much. But, even if he had the money, he could not go away and leave Mrs. Claus's house to the mercy of stray thieves and robbers. In a way, hadn't he on yesterday evening taken the field against robbers?

Besides, he had no cap. There was nothing in sight that looked like a hat. Yes—there hung a North Holland cap!

Femke? America?

## CHAPTER XXX

**W**HILE Walter was looking at Femke's cap and revolving other plans of escape, the door opened and Kaatje, the girl from Holsma's, walked in. Not recognizing her, Walter did not understand her when she said that Femke had sent her to ask how he was. He looked at the messenger searchingly; then he asked:

"Are you trying to make a fool of me?"

He had puzzled over recent events till everything seemed ghostly and unreal; and he was angry.

"My dear sir, Femke sent me."

"What Femke? Somebody's grandmother again." He took a step forward; and his attitude was threatening.

"Are you that giant Miller's sweetheart?" taking another step forward, while Kaatje fell back.

"Young man!"

Kaatje was already outside of the door, Walter close after her with his fists doubled up.

"Young man, what's the matter with you?"

"What's the matter with me? I'm tired of being made a fool of. You understand?"

She retreated backwards; he pursued. It may have looked comical; but that was the way his anger chose to express itself. In this manner the girl returned by the same way she came, which was the footpath across the meadow where the clothes were dried.

"Oh, heavens! If the doctor would only come."

"What do you think of me?" Walter said, punctuating his words.

"Oh, Lord!"

"Do *you* think I'm drunk?"

"Oh, no, no. Not at all!"

"Or crazy?"

"No, no!—Where can the doctor be so long!"

Two very similar shouts put an end to the strained situation.

"Thank God, there he is!"

"Thank God, there it is!"

One cry came from Dr. Holsma's coachman, who was driving up hurriedly; the other cry meant that two boys, who were fishing in the ditch for frogs, had caught Walter's cap.

Walter accepted his lost property without question or complaint; while Kaatje, with tears in her eyes, ran up to Dr. Holsma to explain what was the matter.

"Is it really so bad?" asked that gentleman presently.

He approached Walter, who was shaking the mud from his cap, glad to think that he was concealing his embarrassment and fright.

"Well, my boy, it's a good thing I met you here. I wanted to ask you if you wouldn't like to take dinner with us this evening. Afterwards we will all go out for a little amusement, if you like."

That was the tone Walter needed to hear. He burst into tears.

"Thank you, thank you! That will be nice for my mother, too."

Holsma motioned to Kaatje, who had timidly retired to the background.

“Go to Juffrouw Pieterse and tell her that the young gentleman dines with us, and that he is going to spend the evening with us.”

“Yes,” cried Walter quickly, “and——”

The doctor looked at him anxiously. He was afraid that he saw symptoms of the alleged mental disorder; but Walter’s eye was calm and gave no ground for fear.

“M’neer, can’t she say too that I——”

“Out with it, my boy! What have you on your heart?”

“That I was with you—all day!”

Holsma reflected.

“Certainly,” he said, “all day.”

“From early this morning—from seven o’clock on.”

“From seven o’clock on,” the doctor repeated.

“And—I ate breakfast at your house.”

“Certainly, the young gentleman ate breakfast at our house. To be sure, he ate breakfast with us. Kaatje, you can ride in the carriage with us.”

As Holsma helped Walter in he gave the coachman directions to stop at Juffrouw Pieterse’s, where “the girl” was “to leave a message.” When he took a seat by his protégé, Walter pressed his hand and exclaimed: “Oh, what a good fortune it is that I found you!”

“Do you think so? It was only a—mere accident. Mrs. Claus is a——”

“A cousin?” interrupted Walter.

“Yes, and she’s a good woman,” said Holsma.

“She is a cousin of ours, and I came to visit her. I do that every week, not as a physician, but as a kinsman. You can go to see her as much as you like: nothing will hurt you there.”

“M’neer!” exclaimed Walter suddenly—and he caught his breath—“I think so much of Femke!”

“So?” answered Holsma dryly. “I do too.”

The doctor was diagnosing Walter’s case; but he preferred to do it quietly. While speaking of indifferent things, he noted that Kaatje had been mistaken; that Walter was both excited and exhausted, but that his mind was unaffected. On the contrary, his mind was growing. His soul was expanding.

When Kaatje left the carriage, Walter felt that the time had come to give and receive explanations. Holsma was of a contrary opinion. He was friendly enough, but showed no inclination for heart-to-heart confidences. Walter’s confusing story was promptly interrupted.

“I’ve heard that you’re going to enter the world of business.”

“Yes, sir, the day after to-morrow.”

“Well, that isn’t bad, if you get into the right hands. You must work, though; and that’s good for boys like you.”

Fearing that Walter might imagine he was something more than the average boy, Holsma continued immediately:

“It’s a good thing for everybody, especially young people. They’re all alike; and all need to work. All boys must work; and girls, too. Everybody must work.”

Walter did not understand that the doctor was giving him a dose of medicine; but he saw that the time for explanations had not yet arrived. Still he would have felt better if he could have unburdened his mind of at least a part of those persistent memories of last night. His instinct of chivalry would have prevented him from mentioning the details of the Laps affair, which, after all, had only been an ineffective attack.

He began again; but the doctor interrupted him before he had hardly mentioned the fried potatoes.

“Yes, such things happen to everybody. That doesn’t amount to anything. The thing for young people to do—and for old people, too—is to work. It seems to be rather windy.”

That was true. If it had only been as windy yesterday.

“Do you like pictures?” asked Holsma, when they had left the carriage and were entering his home.

“Of course!”

“Good! Just go into that room. Look at everything as long as you please.”

The doctor pushed him into the room, then ran through the hall and up the stairs to prepare the family for Walter’s reception.

Walter found little pleasure in paintings. He had had no training in art. For him, a man with a dog and a hare was merely a man with a dog and a hare. He felt that a poem ought to have been written about it all; then it would have been intelligible. His glance fell on the portrait of a woman, or a queen, or a fairy, or a mayor’s daughter.

Femke!

Instead of the North Holland cap she wore a diadem of sparkling stars, or rays of—

“Dinner is ready, and papa and mamma invite you to come out to the dining-room. Are you still sore after your fall?” It was little Sietske.

“I didn’t fall.”

“I mean from your fall on the table in the coffee-house. How comical! Well, if you are all right again, we’re going out this evening—papa, mamma, William, Hermann, you, I—all! We’re going to the theatre!”

Sietske had understood her orders.

“Going out?—to the theatre? But my mother——”

“Papa will attend to that. Don’t worry; he will arrange everything.”

Once out in the hall, Walter hesitated again. He motioned to Sietske and took her back into the room.

“Sietske, who is that?”

“That is a great-great-great-great-grandmother of ours.”

“But she looks like——”

“Like Femke! Of course. Like me, too. When Hermann puts on such a cap you can’t tell him from Femke. Come, now. We mustn’t keep mamma waiting.

On entering the dining-room Walter was met by that quiet cordiality that the doctor had prescribed. When all were seated Sietske mentioned the picture again in apologizing to Walter for hurrying him away from it.

“Yes,” remarked the doctor quietly, “there is some

resemblance; but Femke is not so pretty. No, not by a great deal."

A cold douche!

Walter had never thought of Femke's beauty. He really did not know whether the girl was pretty, or not.

"Will you take some sauce, Walter?"

She had called him brother, so solemnly, and with such a mien! Of course the lady in the portrait, with the sparkling diadem, would hold out her hand the same way. Walter made an awkward gesture with his hand.

"Salad?" asked Sietske.

"It will be crowded," said Mevrouw Holsma. "Everyone will want to see the kings and princes. We haven't asked our guest yet if he wants to go. We're going to the theatre; would you like to go with us?"

Walter was charmed at the prospect. He had never been in a theatre, but had long wanted to see such a play as Leentje had described. He cared nothing for kings. He would have given a dozen kings for one baron carrying away a girl in the approved manner. The Glorioso influence was still on him.

"We shall see half of the sovereigns of Europe," said Holsma, "and a dozen candidates——"

Walter wondered what the candidates would do in the "comedy." Sietske explained.

There was still plenty of time. Holsma was going out to see a patient and promised to stop at Juffrouw Pieterse's.

For reasons of fashion and feminine finery the play was not to begin till nine o'clock.



Walter heard that Femke, too, was to witness the performance; and from the conversation he gathered that the relations existing between the aristocratic family and the poor wash-girl were most cordial. Mevrouw Holsma sent Sietske to ask Femke to come in; but Femke preferred to remain with little Erich, with whom she was playing at the time.

"Erich?" thought Walter.

"I thought as much," said Mevrouw Holsma. "That's why she wasn't at the table. She would rather stay with the baby."

"She says, too, that we sit at the table too long for her," added Sietske.

"She wouldn't enjoy the play anyway," observed William. "She's a good girl, but she's a little thick-headed. Don't you think so, mamma?"

"Everyone must act according to his own convictions, and consult his own tastes. Femke is too good to be forced to anything."

There must have been some special reason why the mother was going to the theatre with the rest, when she preferred to stay at home with little Erich, who had the measles. But she was going to remain "only a little while," and then come back with Uncle Sybrand. He would return to the theatre taking Femke with him, if she cared to go.

"I call it thick-headedness," affirmed William. "She just don't want to put on a fine dress."

"No, she doesn't want to be a fine lady," said the mother. "She is very sensible and fears that this might disturb her relations with her mother. We ought to have taken her when she was little; but Mrs.

Claus couldn't give her up then. And now Femke can't give herself up."

"She's only stubborn," William explained.

"She is proud," corrected his mother, "too proud to appear other than she is. She wouldn't exchange places with a princess."

Uncle Sybrand came. He announced that the "Scylla" of Rotgans was to be given, followed by "Chloris," with something else as a close. Holsma had already returned, bringing Walter the assurance that it was all right with his mother.

Walter was enchanted in anticipation. Was he still thinking of Femke?

William said: "So far as I'm concerned she can stay at home. Suppose the students were to see me with a peasant girl! What would they do for me when I enter college in September?"

Such an Amsterdamer calls everybody a "peasant," even if he is a student and able to explain what sort of a "Scylla" that was.

All were now dressed and starting. Walter was to see his first "comedy," and, perhaps, take a part in one.

## CHAPTER XXXI

**G**OOD Muse, sweet Muse, take us back to Pieterseville again. Whisper to me and tell me what happened there during Walter's romantic enchantment; and have a care that my language rises to the dignity of the subject.

We know already, Clio, how the mistress of the castle saw her progeny depart to protect the distressed lady from the nefarious attacks of robbers and murderers; how her blessing and the consecrated blade were withheld, and how the brave youth sallied forth with a nightcap his only weapon. We know, too, how the bachelor Stoffel, the hereditary custodian of the reputation of the family——

Ah, let us treat the matter quite simply, and leave the muse alone.

On the Friday evening in question Juffrouw Pieterse went to bed as usual. The others did the same. There were no indications of bad dreams. There was no trace of anxiety over the terrible danger to which Walter had thoughtlessly exposed himself. This might have been because they did not know of the danger. It had not been at all necessary for Juffrouw Laps to conceal her intention so slyly and always omit Walter's name from the knighthood of the Pieterse family. Thanks to the stupidity of the family, she might have gained her point without any finesse.

Saturday morning dawned, that morning on which

Mrs. Claus applied the restoratives so abundantly, and so efficaciously.

“I wonder where in the world the boy can be so long?” said the mother.

“I don’t suppose he got up very early; and then maybe she had him to read a chapter out of the Bible at breakfast.”

This explanation by Stoffel quieted the family for half an hour.

“How would it do for you to go over there?” Juffrouw Pieterse proposed at last.

“I’m not going, mother. You know it isn’t on my way to school.”

That was a sufficient reason. Never do anything that isn’t on your way—one of the favorite maxims of conservatism. Stoffel himself did not know how profound was the wisdom of his political aphorism.

“How would it do, then, to send Leentje over to Juffrouw Laps’s to inquire about Walter?”

This proposal met with approval, and Leentje was dispatched forthwith.

Oh, poor Juffrouw Laps! She was “the most wretched woman in the world;” and the room from which Walter had fled so suddenly was now the temple of all the heterogeneous griefs and pains that novelists ever make use of.

I will not place Walter above Joseph, Theseus, Jason or Hippolytos. May Apollo preserve me from such blind partiality. Not by any means do I regard my hero as the most interesting mortal that ever left a woman in the lurch. No, not in Walter’s worth do I seek for the measure of the forsaken lady’s despair.

Indeed, Juffrouw Laps's pain was not caused by any reflections as to the beauty or excellence of the vanished knight. There was another element in the matter that was filling her with horror and driving her to distraction. With all due respect for the suffering of other abandoned ladies, Asnath, Ariadne, Medea, Phaedra—but Juffrouw Laps had to face Walter's family. That was the trouble.

Her fertile brain evolved the most wonderful plans. How would it do for her to tell that he had been carried away in a fiery chariot before the eyes of the people, like Elias of old? She discarded the idea, for fear that no one would believe it.

At first she had waited at the window, watching for her little Theseus to return. When she saw him no more she thought that perhaps the mob had carried him off with them. That was not an unpleasant thought; since her fear for his return to his family was greater than her desire for his return to her. This is easily understood: what might he not tell at home?

It was already daylight; but Juffrouw Laps knew that it was too early to go to the Pieterses'. Besides, what would she say? That her little knight had run away during the night? And why? Whither? How did she know but that he had already told the story in all its details?

She determined—not to determine upon anything, and to leave the matter with the "Master" for the present. With this pious resolve she climbed into her maidenly bed; and, before falling asleep, she groaned: "If the rascal had only broken his neck, like the high priest Eli, in First Samuel, 4!"

No doubt the Master saw the distress of his faithful disciple and taught her how to meet the situation that awaited her waking; for Leentje soon returned with the assurance of Juffrouw Laps that Walter was out taking a morning walk.

In a way, this was the truth. The Juffrouw merely neglected to add why he was taking a walk, and at what hour in the morning he had gone out. Leentje, suspecting nothing, asked no questions. For her it was a "matter of course" that he would not go out in the middle of the night.

The family now regarded the incident as fresh evidence of Walter's objectionable habit of roving, and nothing more. They felt no anxiety for his personal safety.

"There it is again!" said the mother. "The trouble and vexation I have with that boy. Anybody else would sit down for a while after breakfast; but he—what does he do? He runs away before it's hardly daylight. Is that any way to do, Stoffel?"

"No, mother."

"And to leave us here anxious and worrying over him!"

"Yes, mother."

"This is a nice caper he's cutting again. He knows very well that we're all uneasy and won't have a minute's peace till he comes. God only knows where he is."

Stoffel could not wait to hear more. It was time for him to go to school.

It may be repeated that there was not a word of truth in all this uneasiness and anxiety. The family

considered such a display to be the proper thing; though, for the rest, they did not manifest the slightest interest in Walter's fate. For aught they knew some accident might have happened to the boy; but, instead of making a serious effort to find out what had become of him, his mother found it easier to accuse him of indecorous conduct and general worthlessness.

Thus matters remained until Dr. Holsma's carriage drove up before Juffrouw Pieterse's door that afternoon and Kaatje alighted with her message. After the recent fright Walter had given her, she was glad enough to escape from such close proximity to the young lunatic. For thus she regarded him.

All rushed to the window.

"There he is; there he is!" cried the whole family in a breath, and as loud as they could. "Did you ever! Really, he's sitting there in Dr. Holsma's carriage."

This flattering observation banished everything else from their thoughts, and made Kaatje's task an easy one. It was now a simple matter for her to allay their fears. They were no longer concerned to know where Walter *had been*. It was enough that he was now in Dr. Holsma's carriage.

"Ate breakfast at the doctor's? Girl, you don't say so! And—and—why isn't the coachman wearing his furs?"

Kaatje was dumbfounded and could only stammer some reference to the season. In fact, the manner in which her message was being received strengthened her worst suspicions of Walter's sanity. It seemed to her that the entire family was a little "off."

“And he really ate breakfast at the doctor’s? Do you understand, Trudie? Ate breakfast at Dr. Holsma’s!”

“Yes, he ate breakfast with us. To be sure he did. The doctor himself said so.”

“At Dr. Holsma’s, and ate breakfast there?”

“Why, certainly. Where else?”

“And did he use the good manners I’ve taught him?”

“Of course, Juffrouw! But——”

“And is he now in the carriage with the doctor?”

“Why, Juffrouw—naturally!”

“Listen, my dear,” continued the proud mother, “I am going to tell you something; but you need not repeat it to anybody else. Don’t you know, that’s an unusual child!”

“Yes,” sighed Kaatje, thoroughly convinced, “I know it.”

“You know it, don’t you? And do you know why? I’m going to tell you. He’s an unusual child, because—Pietro, move away a little, and you, too, Mina. Trudie, you can stay where you are, but pay attention to your knitting!—he’s an unusual child, don’t you know, because, before he was born, you understand——”

“Oh, Juffrouw!”

“Yes, my dear, I dreamed of a butterfly; and it was dragging off an elephant! You understand now?”

“Oh, yes, Juffrouw. I understand exactly.”

“Don’t you see? That’s the reason. Give the doctor my politest regards, and thank him for me. If



he's only well-behaved—I mean Walter. And the coachman wears such a fur cap only in the winter?"

Kaatje managed to escape, fully resolved never to dream of elephants and butterflies. Such an indulgence seemed to her to be particularly dangerous; for she now began to think in all seriousness that the whole family was crazy, and that what she had seen in Walter was merely a sample of the general disorder.

When a few hours later the doctor himself stopped at Juffrouw Pieterse's, her joy over Walter's exaltation knew no bounds. Holsma took note of the stupid woman's foibles and follies, and resolved to prescribe an intellectual diet for Walter that would counteract their influence.

Poor Juffrouw Laps! If she had only known how happily everything had turned out, how much worry she might have spared herself! In the seclusion of her own room she was still quoting the Bible and fighting for her honor.

## CHAPTER XXXII

THE reader is now invited to return to the theatre party, from which he was called suddenly away by the anxiety experienced in certain quarters over Walter's disappearance.

The family took their seats, in the parquet this time, having had to give up their box to visiting potentates. The box was still unoccupied.

"A comedy!" Walter thought. He looked about him and listened.

The house was crowded, and everyone was talking. Backstairs gossip and court scandals were passed around. People were wondering who would sit there, and who would sit *there*. Later arrivals were pushing at one another and quarreling about seats.

"The programs for the princes are printed on silk. What do you suppose it cost a yard?"

"Rotgans is one of the first poets!"

"Hm! Better say one of the second."

"He's a poet of the seventh class."

"Why, then, one of his plays? We have poets whose song is as clear as a bell!"

"Of course, Bilderdyk! A Phoenix!"

"Oh, these foreigners don't understand a word of it anyway, and it doesn't make any difference what the play is."

"It's a pity about Floris."

"Oh, there's something behind that."

"Yes, Bilderdyk is a patriot."

"A genuine Hollander!"

"A genuine——"

"He will give those foreigners something to think about."

"Sh!—— . . . not much flattery. No Hollander is going to do that."

"Sh!"

Everybody stood up. A footman appeared in the royal box, probably to see whether the cushions were straight on the chairs, or not.

"The idea, the very idea of standing up before a lackey!"

It was enough to make them indignant; but they had done it, even those who protested loudest. There were city aldermen in the number, and doctors, and professors, and prominent business men, including, perhaps, the great Kopperlith.

Another period of babbling and waiting; then another footman appeared. Again everybody sprang to his feet. Again all, except the silent Holsmas, railed at such stupidity.

The crowd became more restless. Innumerable times were they fooled by some footman or other, who opened a door to break the monotony. The people were already beginning to complain, but softly, cautiously.

Walter was carried away with the elegance and magnificence of it all. One thing, however, jarred upon his sense of propriety: he wondered how such swell folk could say such commonplace things. The

Holsmas said nothing. Only once, when Uncle Sybrand pointed to a certain box, did they join in the general hubbub.

“She will sit there, I think.”

“I shall be sorry if I have left little Erich all for nothing,” said Mevrouw Holsma.

“He’s safe with Femke.”

“Yes, but I had rather be with him myself. The child is sick. I’m not going to wait much longer.”

“It’s doubtful whether she will come with the others. I’ve heard that she’s full of moods and mischief. She cares nothing for convention. It seems to run in the blood.”

“If she isn’t here by ten o’clock I’m going. I don’t care much about it, anyway.”

This conversation occupied Walter for a short time. Who was this person on whose account Mevrouw Holsma had left the bedside of her sick child?

The tension of expectancy was broken, and a momentary excitement pulsed through the multitude. All arose to their feet, and remained standing.

An emperor, or something of the kind, entered the royal box. Walter could see little; but he inferred what was going on from whisperings he heard about him. His majesty had made a quick rush for his chair, turning over a few other chairs in so doing. That was a habit of his. Then he looked about the auditorium for a moment with squinted eyes, jerked up his chair and fell into it. He was in a hurry. The public was now at liberty to take their seats.

The other boxes were now filled quickly, as if by a stroke of magic. Remarkable costumes were on

exhibition. There were bodices three inches wide, with skirts of as many yards. Voluptuous bosoms hovered between chin and girdle. Scanty sleevelets did not know whether they were to cover arms or shoulders. The ladies wore kid gloves reaching to their armpits, and on their heads were turbans and flower-gardens. The uniforms of the gentlemen were even more conspicuous. Those shakos! The enemy would have run at the sight of them.

The orchestra began to play. It was that song about the brave Dunois, of course.

"Arise!" someone called; and all scrambled to their feet again in honor of the brave hero.

The curtain went up.

"Yes, Minos, on the present that I gave to thee—  
'Twas stolen from the church—"

"What church?" asked Walter.

"Sh!" from William. "Poetic license. You will see how it is."

"—hangs Nisus' crown and life."

"Qu'est-ze qu'elle changte?" cried the countess-palatine. Then she let herself out on costumes, speaking in a noisy voice.

Walter listened like a finch. Not that he understood very well; but everything strange interested him intensely.

Not a soul was touched by the tragic bravery of King Minos; no one was listening. Poor Rotgans! Afterwards it was said that Napoleon had been especially pleased with "our Snoel" and with "our

Watlier." Goodness, Napoleon! When he was to be crowned he had Talma the mimic to drill him for the ceremony—instead of saying to Talma: "Look, this is the way an emperor appears when he's crowned!"

Walter listened attentively; even though he sometimes felt that he could make such verses himself.

During the performance another commotion arose. One of their majesties had asked for a glass of orange lemonade; and this was something the buffetier did not have. A runner was dispatched to the drug-store post haste. He returned with a bottle of lemon-syrup. The situation became threatening. The news spread like fire that they were making a "Majesty" wait for such a trifle. King Minos declared:

"Feelings of pleasure thrill my inner man—"

"De l'eau de fleur d'orange! que diantre!" cried a chamberlain. And Minos noticed that nobody was interested in what was going on in his interior.

A confectioner up on "Olympus" allowed his light to flash out and gave some valuable information; but the police had him by the collar in a jiffy. He was to be dragged away and put in confinement for the present. The technical charge was, "Making a demonstration for the House of Orange." At that time the House of Orange was in exile, and Napoleon's brother was king of Holland.

"Feelings of pleasure thrill my inner man—"

repeated Minos with gusto. The conductor of the orchestra seized his baton and was going to play,

“Hail to the Emperor.” Many stood up in readiness to escape in case of danger.

In the meantime the prisoner was screaming as if he were possessed; but the two Italian police that Napoleon had brought with him could not understand a word.

The emperor himself had forgotten that he had called for orange water and was now engrossed in a military map.

“Qu’ a-t-il?” he seemed to be asking the lady next to him.

Minos had begun again and was once more repeating his assurance that “feelings of pleasure thrill——”

Walter noted that the grown-up members of the Holsma party did not pay the slightest attention to the play.

“If she doesn’t come soon, I’m going,” Mevrouw Holsma repeated.

“Perhaps she’s sitting further back in the emperor’s box, where we can’t see her.”

“I’ve heard that in Paris she never stays fifteen minutes in the same place. Maybe we shall find her somewhere else,” remarked another.

“I am not going to wait but five minutes longer. My little Erich is worth more to me than a thousand cousins——”

“Of the king,” added Holsma.

Walter had thought that they meant Femke. What, then, could be so interesting about the princess? The boxes were full of them.

At the close of the third act Mevrouw Holsma left with Uncle Sybrand, who was to return with Femke.

"If she will come," he said. "For she cares nothing for such a fuss."

Walter knew better. Uncle Sybrand ought to have seen her in the "Juniper Berry." But a knight tells no tales.

Old Minos is insanely in love with Ismene, who is so beautiful and virtuous. Scylla is insanely in love with Minos, who is old and dignified. Ismene is in love with Focus, who is a hero; and, possibly, Focus loves Ismene, though he does not treat her quite gallantly. He says to her:

"Princess, thy reasons spare: to me they're odious!"

The tumult on Mount Olympus began afresh. Had the rebellious confectioner returned? All eyes were directed toward the gallery. A policeman in uniform was seen remonstrating in vain with some men on the front seat. In order to make them understand his French, or Italian, he was pulling at their arms. They were to understand that he did not want to arrest them, or kill them, but merely wanted them to give up their seats.

"Princess, thy reasons spare: to me they're odious!"

"Qu' y a-t-il encore?" asked the emperor again; and, when one of the chamberlains answered his question, he laughed heartily. Heads were together everywhere. Something interesting was going forward on Mount Olympus. People whispered and tittered and laughed outright. Their eyes were fastened on the gallery. Even the emperor stood up and leaned out of his box. But it did no good: he could not see around the corner. He was surprised at this.



The countess-palatine, however, had got to the bottom of the matter. She was exchanging telegraphic messages with someone in the background on Mount Olympus. No one was thinking of Rotgans' play.

She was greeting someone with that famous fan. Whom? The rebellious confectioner? With arms extended she was testifying that there was something extraordinary up there among that rabble.

"Princess, thy reasons spare: to me they're odious!"

The countess-palatine threw off all restraint, and laughed and laughed. After the emperor had laughed hilarity was permissible. Her pleasure was beyond her control.

I should have to have a double pen to report what Uncle Sybrand said on his return, and, at the same time, reproduce the exclamation that escaped Walter, who was looking towards the gallery with eyes and mouth wide open.

"Where is Femke?" asked Holsma.

"She didn't want to come," replied Uncle Sybrand.  
"Just as I said."

"There she is!" cried Walter.

"Who?"

"Femke, M'neer, Femke, Femke—that is Femke! And she——"

The girl above had taken hold of the policeman by the collar and, pushing him to one side, had pressed forward to the front row. There she had seated herself on the laps of the fellows the policeman had been negotiating with in vain.

“It is Femke, M’neer. If only they don’t hurt her!”

Again the emperor stood up and stared at Mount Olympus. He saw the girl with the North Holland cap and nodded to her. The countess-palatine greeted again with her fan, as if she would congratulate her on securing the seat.

“But, M’neer, it is Femke,” cried Walter, amazed that he received no answer.

Even Holsma and Sybrand were surprised, but not so much so as Walter.

“Now, children,” said Holsma, “you can tell your mother that we saw her.” And to Walter he continued, “That girl is a relation of ours.”

“Yes, Femke!”

“No, that isn’t her name; and——”

“M’neer, don’t I know Femke?”

That sounded quite different from what Walter had said that evening when he “denied” her.

The girl’s big blue eyes, roving about the hall, suddenly fell on Walter. She bent over, looked him attentively in the face, then nodded to him and threw him a kiss.

At least, he thought it was that way; and it was that way. But everyone in the parquet thought that the kiss had been intended for him. Folk of quality were annoyed at the insolence of the peasant wench; while more “sporty” persons returned the attention.

Soon hissing was heard. The news had leaked out that Princess Erika, the cousin of the king, had dressed in the national costume to show her affection for the people.

"Don't you believe it, M'neer? I tell you that is Femke," Walter assured him with tears in his eyes.

"No, no, my boy. That girl is not Femke."

"But, she greeted me!"

"You saw the emperor greet her; and you know he would not salute a wash-girl."

That was perhaps true; but it was hard for Walter to accept it. And, on the other hand, it was just as hard for him to believe that the princess was a cousin of the Holsmas.

Again he imagined that the girl was nodding to him and motioning her lips. It looked to him as if she said: "My brother!" Walter lisped the words after her and pressed both hands to his breast.

Yes, now he had it! They considered him a little daft and wanted to cure him of his fixed idea. That would explain the visit to the theatre and also Femke's alleged unwillingness to come with Uncle Sybrand. But—how did she dare to interfere with the policeman? And the greeting from the emperor? And how did Holsma know that he had "denied" Femke, and that her presence could threaten his peace of mind?

"Oh, M'neer, let Femke sit here! I will be perfectly quiet. I am so afraid she will get hurt up there among those men."

Holsma looked at him wistfully. After all, could Kaatje have been right about it? He sought to distract Walter's attention by referring to other things; but it was useless.

"All right," said Holsma at last. "I just wanted to tease you a little, Femke is sitting up there, be-

cause she—doesn't wish to sit here. She thinks that it wouldn't be proper, because she's only a wash-girl. She's afraid we would be ashamed. You see?"

"M'neer, no one need be ashamed to sit by her. Not even the emperor."

"Yes, yes," agreed Holsma. "Quite so. Femke is a brave girl and doesn't need to cringe before anybody. Watch the play, my boy."

Walter was willing to do what the doctor said, but not without taking leave of that glorious apparition. He looked up; and she smiled to him again. Then she took from her breast a rose branch, with three buds on it, held it moment between the forefinger and thumb of her left hand, pointed to Walter with her right and let it fall.

The rosebuds landed on the bald pate of a stout gentleman near the Holsma party. He seized them and examined them admiringly; but, before he could decide what to do with them, Walter had sprung over half a dozen chairs and deprived him of the precious property. With a glance toward Olympus, Walter pressed the roses to his lips. Princess Erika nodded approval; and the playful countess-palatine applauded lustily.

That was more than Walter could bear. He had never forgiven himself for denying her; but she, the noble, the big-hearted, the majestic one!—she had proclaimed her pardon publicly before the people. And that was why she preferred to sit in the gallery. She had washed away the black spots from his soul; she had restored his soiled chivalry. These thoughts flashed through Walter's mind like lightning.

He sank to the floor in a faint. But was it any wonder?

The Holsmas took him home with them for the night; and another message was sent to Juffrouw Pieterse.

“Don’t you see, Stoffel? Just as I said! I don’t care if eveybody knows it. He’s simply living at Dr. Holsma’s. Trudie, don’t forget when Leentje goes to the grocer’s— Upon my soul, he’s at Dr. Holsma’s all the time!”

## CHAPTER XXXIII

**T**HE next morning, Sunday, the doctor invited Walter into his study. He spoke to him sympathetically and encouraged the boy to lay his case before him; though he avoided everything that might make Walter believe that his experiences were anything extraordinary. He already knew more about it than Walter could tell. Even Walter's adventure with Juffrouw Laps was perfectly transparent to him. There was nothing lost to him because of the boy's lack of skill in handling the story.

While Walter poured out to him his inner experiences, Holsma listened quietly, as if it was all familiar to him. Walter's reverence and passion for the good he interpreted as a commonplace phenomenon incident to budding youth. He treated the boy's love for Femke as an ordinary matter. He admitted that it had been exactly the same way with him when he was a boy—a method that few parents and educators seem to be familiar with.

“Certainly, certainly, my boy. In such moods a fellow would like to be everywhere at the same time, ruling, regulating and putting things into order. He feels that he's responsible for everything; and it hurts him to see so much crookedness in the world. I know very well how it is. But you must consider the means

and remedies at your disposal. How are you going to begin to improve things?"

Walter was silent.

"Do you think that everyone is bad? I suppose you hardly think that. There are plenty of people in the world who wish for the same things that you are worrying about. Why don't they change the world?"

Again Walter was silent. The very simplicity with which Holsma put the question disconcerted him.

"I will try to help you out. Do you believe that I am a good man?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Walter enthusiastically.

"You think so? Well, I think so too. I should be ashamed not to be able to say that. Why don't I reform the world? You often speak of Africa. That's because you don't know that country, my boy. And I, who am a good man, have not abolished slavery. Why not, do you suppose?"

Walter returned no answer. Holsma was busy with a surgical operation. Is it any wonder that the patient tried to withdraw the member that was being cut away?

"I will present the matter to you differently. Do you hear that knocking and hammering? Listen! That comes from the blacksmith's shop over there. It isn't so bad on Sunday; but you can easily imagine that the noise sometimes disturbs me."

"In case of sickness!"

"Yes, and also when I wish to think. And then I should like to see the blacksmiths swept away—quick—just like that! But why don't I do it?"

“ Because—because you can’t, M’neer.”

“ Quite right. For the same reason I have not yet corrected any of the wrongs in Africa. Nor in Asia; nor in America; nor in other countries that I might mention. But yesterday evening, when you were taken sick in the theatre, I brought you home with me and put you to bed. Then I sent a messenger to quiet your mother. That was my duty, wasn’t it?

“ No thanks, my boy. It seemed to me to be my duty; and I did it—because I could. Whatever is impossible, is not my duty; and that’s the reason I don’t take those blacksmiths between my thumb and forefinger and transport them to some other clime. For the same reason I don’t fret over doings in Africa. Impossible duty is no duty; and running after the impossible interferes with the performance of real duties. At school did you ever fail to know a lesson?”

“ Oh yes, very often! But not lately; because Femke——”

“ Leave Femke out of account for the present. I may say something about her another time. When you were neglecting your books at school, you were thinking of other things, things far removed from your work.

“ That is a mistake that many young people make—don’t be offended: I did the same thing—and usually on account of laziness. It is more convenient to imagine one’s self soaring over the distant mountain top than to lift a foot and step over the stone just in front of one. Of all the million things that you would like to do there are only a very few that you can do.



Busy yourself with these few. That is the way to succeed. Whatever comes up, always ask: 'What is my immediate duty?' Will you promise to do this?"

Walter gave Holsma his hand on it.

"And you would like to know more, my boy? I would, too. What lies before you? Well, you are behind in your studies. Other boys of your age know more. We will speak of that again, however; for that is something to be attended to later, and does not come under the head of immediate duty. That smattering of Latin, for which you envy William, you can acquire in a few months, when once you've learned how to use your will. The enemies you have to fight now are quite different from the knights of your romances. Do not underestimate the difficulties you will have to contend with. That might result in your defeat. You must learn to use your intellectual faculties at will; and keep a firm grip on 'Fancy,' or else she will throw you head over heels. Dreaming is not living."

Walter nodded assent.

"True manliness," Holsma continued, "means, to do what has to be done, no difference how insignificant it may be. What would you think of a lot of knights, who let tramps beat them over the heads because their code of honor did not allow them to fight with tramps? You are going into business now: come to me in a month and tell me if you have kept your word. Then we will speak further; but—that first! Will you?"

"Certainly I shall keep my word, M'neer. But, M'neer, may I ask——?"

“About Femke? Well, that is a good, brave girl. She’s a cousin of mine.”

“But how did she happen to be——?”

“The young lady in the theatre wasn’t Femke. That was Princess Erika. We wanted to see her because her ancestors were related to ours. You rogue, you! There was nothing special about that.”

“A real princess?”

“Yes; and Femke is a real wash-girl. I hope that Princess Erika has as admirable a character as Femke. But don’t attribute too much importance to this, my boy. Such differences in related families are of frequent occurrence, whether one notices them, or not. There was a time when Erika’s forefathers dressed themselves in skins; and mine did the same. We don’t know whether she is aware that she has relations here or not. Uncle Sybrand found out—well, he takes a sort of pleasure in tracing out the identity of opposites. Rightly understood, the world is smaller than you imagine; everything is a link in the same sequence. Who knows but that you may turn the course of history to-morrow, when you go to work for—what is the style of the firm?”

“Ouwetyd & Kopperlith.”

“Yes, when you go to work for Ouwetyd & Kopperlith. But, whether it’s to be an historical event, or not, perform your immediate duty. That is the chivalrous, manly thing for you to do—if you will take my advice. Will you?”

“Yes, M’neer! But—Femke?”

“There you go again! She has nothing to do with

your immediate duty. The lady that you must attend upon and serve faithfully is—who?”

“Do you mean ‘Business’?”

“Right. If you are determined to know more about Femke, I will tell you what she says. She says that for the present you must think of nothing but your work.”

“Oh, I will, I will!”

“For about ten years.”

“Ten years? Ten?”

“Yes, that is what she said when she heard how little you know and how little you can do.”

“Ten years?”

“Yes, that is what she said. Perhaps eight, perhaps twelve, perhaps twenty. One cannot say exactly beforehand. You understand that, don’t you?”

“Ten years!”

“So she said.”

“I will!”

“Good. It will give me pleasure—and Femke, too. Don’t imagine it will be particularly difficult. Ten years ago thousands began just where you will begin to-morrow; and they are still alive. So, you see, it *can* be done. Besides, think only of the first month; and then the time will seem shorter. I shall expect you to come to see me in about a month; then we shall have more to say.”

Before Walter left, he promised again to banish all boyish follies from his thoughts. But he put away the rosebuds; and he kept them.















